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Andy Warhol's Cinema Beyond the Lens

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Andy Warhol's Cinema Beyond the Lens

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For Borden

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Andy Warhol's Cinema Beyond the Lens

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This dissertation examines a small selection of the hundreds of films made by Andy Warhol and his collaborators between 1963 and 1968. Each chapter contextualizes a particular aspect of Warhol's filmmaking in terms of the artistic and cultural circumstances that informed it. Through an analysis of the content of specific films, rather than just their formal or stylistic tendencies, I discuss how the filmmaking process might have functioned for those involved in the films' production, as well as how those films might have functioned for specific spectators. The first chapter is a speculation on how Warhol might have understood filmmaking as a method for creating concrete connections between feelings and things—for collecting imagery with his camera in order to create a historical catalog of people and their emotions. This first chapter also considers how some art critics in the 1960s used Warhol's early silent films as exemplars for their own anti-formalist art-historical and critical discourses. The second chapter examines the relationship between Warhol's films and the proliferation of amphetamine use amongst his collaborators. Amphetamines functioned to perpetuate for its users a way of life based on an alternative conception of time, and often involved a continued engagement with bad feelings, which fueled much of the creativity of the artistic community whose locus was Warhol's Factory in the mid-1960s. As such, many of Warhol's films from this period exhibit what I term an "amphetamine aesthetic"—visual clues that suggest the effects of long-term amphetamine use by its participants. The third chapter is an analysis of a single film, *Lonesome Cowboys*. Participants in the film's production used the conventions of the Hollywood Western film genre to create a circumscribed space for transforming their everyday lives and their relationship to contemporary politics in the late 1960s. All of these chapters explore the effects of Warhol's particular approach to filmmaking, which involved Warhol's own detached style of directing, as well as his cultivation of an ultrapermissive environment in which his collaborators—actors, directors, writers, and technicians—felt free to experiment. This environment was predicated on the idea that the boundary between the space in front of the camera and the world beyond it was simultaneously arbitrary and deeply imbricated. Such a fluid boundary between the world inside and outside the scope of Warhol's camera is in part why some spectators, watching his films a half-century after they were made, might still find new meanings for the present in the films themselves.

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Introduction

My experiences with Andy Warhol began with books, not artworks or films, and these books had a very specific function in my teenage life: they offered representations of a world full of people with whom I could relate, more so than the world I encountered in my daily life in Birmingham, Alabama in the mid-1990s. But more than as just figures from the past, the people associated with Warhol's Factory served as models for me, especially in terms of how I related to my close-knit group of friends. We were run-of-the-mill teenage misfits: we cut class, took drugs, experimented with sex, and were socially maladjusted. We were definitely insular and rebellious, but also exceptionally intelligent and funny, and we cultivated a cruel sense of humor that we delightedly inflicted on one another. My best friend Borden and I were obsessed with everybody in Warhol's Factory, especially Ondine, Brigid Berlin, and Edie Sedgwick. We read Jean Stein and George Plimpton's biography of Sedgwick multiple times and scoured bookstores for volumes that contained photos of Warhol and his crowd from the mid-1960s. Before we had ever seen a Warhol film, we had read David Bourdon's description of the Pope Ondine sequence in *Chelsea Girls*, in which Ondine loses his temper and slaps Ronna Page after she calls him a "phoney," so many times that we felt as if we had seen the actual film version.¹ My favorite books were *The Velvet Years: Warhol's Factory 1965–67*, which contained short texts by Factory participants alongside photographs by Stephen Shore; and *POPism: The Warhol Sixties*, Warhol's memoir

¹ Jean Stein and George Plimpton, *Edie: An American Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); David Bourdon, *Warhol* (New York: Abrams, 1989) 247–248.

written with Pat Hackett.² I prized *The Velvet Years* for its photos: images of the ramshackle silver Factory with people lounging on its fabled couch; Sedgwick in a black leotard dancing to records; Warhol, Malanga, and several other figures in striped boatneck t-shirts, hamming for the camera. *POPism* now figures as a prominent resource for me as well as for many scholars of Warhol's art and films; it is eminently quotable and is as close as one can get to an account of the 1960s by Warhol that does not smack of the comically aloof persona he projected in interviews throughout much of the decade.³ But when I first encountered *POPism*, I read it, as I did all the other Warhol books I could find, more like a fan magazine than as a viable historical resource. Borden and I didn't just want to know these people—we wanted to be them. When I was a sophomore in high school, I had my long brown hair cut and dyed to look like Sedgwick's. Borden had recurring dreams in which he looked in the mirror and instead of his own reflection, he saw Warhol. Somewhere in a closet in Birmingham, there is a drawing I made after one of Shore's photographs [figure 1]—but instead of John Palmer and Sedgwick's faces, I drew careful portraits of Borden and myself.

These anecdotes are slightly embarrassing to recall now, but I am also aware that the types of activities I am alluding to are not particularly unique for teenagers. I imagine that such imitation and obsessiveness was and continues to be commonplace for people

² Shore, Stephen and Lynne Tillman. *The Velvet Years: Warhol's Factory 1965–67* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1995); Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1980).

³ See, for instance, Kenneth Goldsmith, ed. *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004).

born in the age of mass media fan culture. Even Warhol refers to this sort of adolescent fandom in his *Philosophy*:

So today, if you see a person who looks like your teenage fantasy walking down the street, it's probably not your fantasy, but someone who had the same fantasy as you and decided instead of getting it or being it, to *look like it*, and so he went to the store and bought the look that you both like. So forget it. Just think about all the James Deans and what it means.⁴

As Warhol suggests, the subjects of one's teenage fantasies have everything to do with trying to carve out a place for oneself in the world, and to manage feelings related to identification and desire. We make choices either to obtain our objects of desire or to become them, but ultimately our actions all seem to stem from wanting to possess them, to know them intimately.

For me, this dissertation, in addition to or even in spite of anything else it might be as a work of scholarship, is in essence a continuation of my early, obsessive desire to know Warhol's world intimately—to be able to grasp it and to live in it, as ahistorical or impossible as that may sound. My desire to understand Warhol's films comes from a personal place, and it is likely that because of my own history with some of the materials I work with—the books but also the films as I came to know them before even watching them from their descriptions in books—that I have produced a dissertation riddled with idiosyncrasies and subjective interpretations of the films and the histories I address in

⁴ Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1975), 53. For more on fandom, see Lisa Cohen, *All We Know: Three Lives* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012); Martha Gever, *Entertaining Lesbians: Celebrity, Sexuality, and Self-Invention* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993). Richard Meyer discusses this quotation specifically in terms of homosexual desire and its manifestation in Warhol's *Elvis* series. See Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 151–152.

each chapter. But I also believe that the risk of such subjectivity is embedded in all the scholarship that I love. By acknowledging my own essential subjectivity and by harnessing it, my goal has been to produce a work that grapples with specific historical and cultural questions about the varied circumstances behind the production of Warhol's films.⁵

The questions that I decided to ask, it turns out, have a lot to do with my early experiences as a Warhol fan and how my own internalizing and mimicking of Warhol's and his crowd's approach to the world around them eventually shaped my awareness of my own identity, as well as my approach to academic scholarship. Even after high school, my interest in Warhol influenced some of the most fundamental life decisions I made as a young person. When Borden and I were trying to figure out what to study in college, he called me on the phone one night and said, "Did you know that there is this thing called art history, and if we major in it we could actually study Andy Warhol for real?" What he meant was that we could make our private, insular world, the world we

⁵ My understanding of cultural studies as a discipline, as well as its relationship to art history and visual studies, originates with Douglas Crimp's essay "Getting the Warhol We Deserve." In this essay, Crimp discusses Meaghan Morris's ideas about the "recognition of the double play of transference": "One result of this failure on the part of the analyst of popular culture is an identification with 'the people,' such that 'the people' 'have no defining characteristics,' except as 'the textually delegated, allegorical emblem of the critic's own activity...'" (Douglas Crimp, "Getting the Warhol We Deserve," *Social Text* no. 59 [Summer 1999], 55, quoting Meaghan Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies," in *What is Cultural Studies? A Reader*, ed. John Storey [London: Arnold, 1996], 156–158.) In this Introduction, I include an account of my own personal history with my subject and my research, to acknowledge to the best of my ability the double play of transference that has been present throughout my own interaction with Warhol's world and artworks. My use of personal narrative likewise has been inspired by Morris' "Banality in Cultural Studies," which begins with an anecdote by Morris, which frames her own ideas within the essay. A more immediate influence on my choice to include personal narrative in my dissertation has been the first part of Ann Cvetkovich's book *Depression: A Public Feeling*, which I read intermittently while writing this Introduction. The frank tone of Cvetkovich's book has had a profound affect on my ability to be open about my experience with Warhol over the years. See Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

had cordoned off from our daily, “outside” lives, into our actual everyday reality. Although I had no awareness of this at the time, our motivation behind this decision was fundamentally political; when we made the choice to study art history, we were also trying to lend legitimacy to our own queer identities. As two gay teenagers in the South, we had very few examples of how to live an out and queer life. It was exhilarating to think that our lives could somehow involve, in an official capacity, the communities with which we had been so eager to identify for so long. Until Borden mentioned it on the phone that day, I had had no exposure to art history as a discipline, and it wasn’t until years later, in graduate school, that I began to consider Warhol as a subject for my own scholarship. In the meantime, I became more familiar with Warhol’s films. My high school friends and I had seen many of the post-1968, Paul Morrissey-directed Warhol pictures like *Flesh* (1968), *Trash* (1970), and *Heat* (1972) after we discovered some sort of mail order video rental service that delivered the videotapes to us. I also managed to find bootlegs of other Warhol films at video rental establishments in Austin. In 2003, I had the opportunity to organize a screening series of some 16mm prints of Warhol films from the Museum of Modern Art, in conjunction with a Warhol exhibition at the Austin Museum of Art. For that program I included *Blow Job* (1964), one of the *Mario Banana* (1964) films, *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1965), *Outer and Inner Space* (1965), and *Chelsea Girls* (1966). For this last film, Borden visited Austin to watch it with me. It was the first time either of us had ever seen it in its entirety.

In March of 2005, Douglas Crimp visited the University of Texas, where I was enrolled in the MA program in art history, to screen some Warhol films and to give a

talk. Prior to this event, the Art History department at my university organized a screening of *Horse* and *Screen Test #2* (both 1965), and in his talk Crimp discussed Warhol's collaboration with the writer Ronald Tavel. This talk would eventually become the chapter "Coming Together to Stay Apart" in Crimp's 2013 book on Warhol's films, *"Our Kind of Movie"*.⁶ During the few days that Crimp was in Austin, he also held a seminar, which I attended, although I kept silent after sheepishly introducing myself during the preliminaries. I wasn't very good at talking during seminars then. Secretly though, I relished every moment of the discussion. The spring of 2005 was, in many ways, a pivotal time for me. I was working to finish my master's thesis, and I was still undecided about whether to pursue a PhD. I had also just begun to think about what "queer" means. I was 25 years old, and since high school I had experienced various stages of being out. In many ways, Borden's and my attachment to Warhol's world had been our own seeking out of a queer community, albeit a fantasy one, although we probably never discussed our interest in Warhol in such terms. Even in my first years of graduate school, I hadn't thought about identity in a rigorously critical way, and I had basically never learned to discuss issues of identity thoughtfully or with a historical perspective. Sitting in that seminar room, I had a feeling that I was seeing a new way forward and after not studying Warhol or his films consistently for years, Crimp's discussion of queerness revived my interest in the Warhol films. I wrote pages of notes, most of which now read like what they are: the inchoate, unfiltered journal entries of a

⁶ Douglas Crimp, *"Our Kind of Movie"* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013).

young graduate student. I can't decipher the ideas behind many of them. A page from the notebook:

How can I look at Warhol's films as---am I too "involved"? I think I recognized Warhol's world as a familiar place before I even knew what "queer" was all about—identified w/ it before I identified myself really. In fact, I'm not sure I've really taken the next step, & if I need to it won't, well, Fuck. I thought I was inside something "normal" & everything else was fucked up. Have I been on the outside the whole time? Those films & that world are safe, & it's everything else that is incongruous.

Something has happened. I'm not sure that I understand it fully yet. Something about being too comfortable w/ not naming—not even wanting to name now—what happened

Need to talk to BBB [Borden]

This half-baked passage, although written at the beginning of my still young life as a scholar, actually contains kernels of many ideas that run through this dissertation: questions about how Warhol's films resonate with audiences; how identifying them as queer does or does not function to elucidate how the films functioned for those who made them; issues of inside and outside, specifically how the films represent an insular world with its own rules, apart from some other world that seems unsafe; and the resistance to naming what the qualities are constitute that world. In the end, I still feel sometimes that I am making sense of all these issues for my best friend—or alternately, that I have arrived at nothing, and there is no way to historicize or reconstitute how my idea of Warhol, his films and the world they represented affected us as teenagers, or to legitimize that world through academic research and writing.

Later during Crimp's seminar, I wrote down a more concrete idea: "My ideal dissertation topic, (probably impossible): DRUGS: FILM: FACTORY." I then composed

what is basically a list of feelings that I associated with that idea. I did not realize it at the time, but I had instinctively connected my own affective experience of the films, and the feelings that their participants suggested through their words and actions to amphetamines: “hermetic, compulsive, self-centered/self-conscious, narcissistic, empty...despondency, obtuse, narrowly ‘empathetic’...the exhibitionism, the fastidiousness, the anger, with, fuckedupedness.” To me, these were the feelings that drove the creative energy of the Factory. I am sure that my own characterization of these feelings had been formed not only by my own experience of watching some of Warhol’s films, but also by the many published descriptions of them that I had read.⁷ It would be years before I returned to these notebook pages to begin writing the second chapter of my dissertation, which explores the role of amphetamines in Warhol’s Factory. In the meantime, I finished my thesis. I began the coursework for my doctorate, and presented a prospectus for my dissertation that included nothing about drugs, or really about the production of the films at all. Instead, I planned on constructing a history of the reception of Andy Warhol’s films: where and when they were exhibited, how critics and other audience members interpreted them, and how the various conditions of their exhibition affected those interpretations.

Almost immediately after beginning my research at various film archives in New York, I began straying from my initial plan for my dissertation. One reason for this was

⁷ An outstanding example of one of these texts is Mary Woronov’s memoir of her time at the Factory, which is another text that I read multiple times during high school. Woronov’s descriptions of being on speed, and the power she felt over the people around her, were electrifying to me. I discuss Woronov’s book and her discussions of amphetamines more extensively in Chapter Two. See Mary Woronov, *Swimming Underground* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1995).

simply that I became distracted; I was trying to get a handle on the reception of Warhol's films by looking at his clippings files at Anthology Film Archives, MoMA, and in the stores of microfilm of New York newspapers at Columbia University's library. The sheer amount of publicity that Warhol garnered from the mass media during the 1960s was overwhelming. This might seem like an obvious statement—Warhol's celebrity as a 20th-century artist is arguably unprecedented—but faced with the materiality of the archive of clippings and citations I accumulated, I was not only stunned, but surprised at how little I found in the way of substantial evidence for where and when Warhol's films were screened, let alone any insightful critiques of them. Likewise, seeking out former Factory regulars to interview seemed untenable. I didn't want to write an oral history of that time period; to me this had already been done several times over.⁸ I began to realize that in addition to being inundated with source material, I was no closer to being able to name exactly whom I was referring to when I said I wanted to write a history of the exhibition of Warhol's films and "audience interpretation." Whose history was I trying to write, exactly? I seemed to have hit a wall.

While the conceptual underpinnings of my dissertation seemed to crumble with each passing day in New York, other experiences opened new doors for me. The single most important person who contributed to the development of my understanding of

⁸ See for example Bob Colacello, *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000); Gerard Malanga, *Archiving Warhol* (S.I.: Creation Books, 2002); Shore, *The Velvet Years*, Patrick S. Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986); Stein and Plimpton, *Edie: An American Biography*; Ultra Violet, *Famous for 15 Minutes: My Years with the Warhol Factory* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988); Viva, *Superstar* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970); Woronov, *Swimming Underground*, Steven Watson, *Factory Made: Warhol and the Sixties* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003); and John Wilcock, ed., *The Autobiography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol* (New York: Trela Media, 2010).

Warhol's films during this stage of my research was Callie Angell, then director of the Warhol Film Project, a joint endeavor by the Whitney Museum of American Art and MoMA to preserve and catalog all of Warhol's films.⁹ It was Callie who inadvertently drove the final nail into the coffin of my original project when she declared, quite offhandedly one day, that she had tried to put together a definitive exhibition history for Warhol's early film, the 5 ½-hour *Sleep* (1963), but she had basically failed because there simply wasn't one to be found. By that time I had talked with Callie enough to know that she commanded an encyclopedic knowledge of Warhol's films as well as indefatigable research skills, and if her years of searching had turned up next to nothing, there was no way I would be able to do any better. But my conversations with Callie (I only visited her a handful of times, but each visit lasted at least two and sometimes three hours) also gave me the courage to pursue my study of Warhol's films according to my own interests, which really had more to do with the circumstances of the films' production, and the cultures they represent, than strictly with their reception. As her catalogue raisonné of Warhol's *Screen Tests* attests, Callie could identify almost every person who ever stepped in front of Warhol's camera. She was also the first scholar I had ever met who talked about those people as if they were her friends. The most memorable moments of my conversations with Callie are the ones that sound most like gossip—laughing about how Piero Heliczer got angry when Gerard Malanga had sex with Piero's wife Kate during the filming of *Couch* (1964), or contemplating whether Warhol really was an evil

⁹ Angell's essay "Andy Warhol, Filmmaker" is an excellent introduction to Warhol's filmmaking practice. It includes a brief history of the distribution of his films as well as a summary of the Warhol Film Project. See Callie Angell, "Andy Warhol, Filmmaker," in *The Andy Warhol Museum*, ed. The Andy Warhol Museum (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 1994), 121–146. Angell passed away in 2010.

mastermind who manipulated Sedgwick, as some narratives of Sedgwick's biography recount.¹⁰ More than just idle gossip, these stories were for me the keys to unlocking how I might think of Warhol's films as visual clues to understanding a broader history beyond the films' materiality, or their specific function as artworks. The films, it seemed, were flashpoints; their production incited interactions and relationships beyond the actions and images onscreen, and the films themselves remain, in part, the residue of those relationships. To pursue this idea, I decided that the films themselves would have to serve as the primary evidence for shaping my ideas for my dissertation.

Not all of Warhol's films are readily accessible, even to scholars. The 16mm prints reside at MoMA, and, although its Film Studies Center offers free screenings to qualified researchers, reserving weeks at a time to view the fifty-plus preserved films (not including the hundreds of *Screen Tests*), many of which are several hours in length, was never a realistic possibility for me.¹¹ Furthermore, at that time I was less concerned with watching the films in their original 16mm format than with seeing as many films as I

¹⁰ See for example Victor Bockris, *Warhol* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), 227–228; and Stephen Koch, *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films* (New York: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1985), viii. Both of these authors discuss perceptions of Warhol as “evil” or as a manipulative mastermind who took advantage of the people around him. See also Stein and Plimpton, *Edie: An American Biography*, which includes several accounts by friends of Sedgwick and Warhol that Warhol somehow manipulated Sedgwick and was responsible for her drug use. Warhol himself was aware that many people perceived of him as a manipulator who encouraged Sedgwick's self-destructive behavior and drug use, and in *POPism* he carefully denies ever supplying her with drugs. (Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 108.)

¹¹ This count is based on the number of films in MoMA's catalog for Andy Warhol's films, and does not include the hundreds of *Screen Tests* that are also housed at MoMA. (The Museum of Modern Art Circulating Film Library, *The Films of Andy Warhol* [undated catalog of films for rent].) When I say that watching all the 16mm films at MoMA was not a realistic possibility for me, I do not mean to imply that the task is impossible. Scholars such as Angell, who directed the Warhol Film Project, certainly watched all the 16mm prints of the films, and other scholars such as Crimp and J. J. Murphy have certainly watched numerous Warhol films at MoMA in preparation for writing about Warhol's cinema. In my case, I needed to watch as many films as I could as quickly as possible, because my time in New York and in Pittsburgh was limited, and certain material constraints precluded my ability to stay in New York for longer than a few months.

could, to get an idea of what they might reflect in terms of their content—who participated in them and what, if any, patterns of behavior or interactions amongst the actors occurred. So instead of remaining in New York, I spent most of my screening time in Pittsburgh, at the Andy Warhol Museum, which holds VHS transfers of all the preserved MoMA films. The Warhol Museum’s film curator set me up in a small conference room with a television and a pair of headphones, and I was free to watch and re-watch any of the films I wanted. Although from an aesthetic standpoint these conditions were less than ideal, as a researcher I couldn’t have been more fortunate.¹² After a few weeks, I had watched all of the Warhol Museum’s available films.¹³

I may have abandoned my ideas about creating a historical record of the various exhibition and viewing conditions of Warhol’s films, but the history of my own conditions of viewing were now embedded in my research. I had notebooks filled with my initial impressions of the films. I had tried, almost feverishly, to describe every image that I saw, to the point where I felt exhausted after watching some of the films, and also a little depressed because, although I had tried to record everything I had seen, I also came

¹² During a 2011 exhibition of Warhol’s films at MoMA, Amy Taubin wrote an excellent review deriding the museum’s use of DVD transfers of the films instead of screening them in their original 16mm format. See Amy Taubin, “Andy Warhol: Motion Pictures,” *Artforum* 49, no. 7 (March 2011). I agree with Taubin that there is no replacing the experience of watching Warhol’s films in 16mm, and as I have learned from watching films at the MoMA screening room after watching VHS versions of same films in the Warhol Museum, the VHS versions are qualitatively extremely inferior. Videotape simply cannot capture the richness in contrast provided by film, and obviously the small size of the monitor results in losses of detail in the image.

¹³ By my count, I have seen over fifty Warhol films. Most of these viewings were at the Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. However, I have also been able to screen some of the films at various exhibitions, and in different venues. For instance, I saw *The Velvet Underground and Nico* at a public screening at MoMA in 2008, and I helped to organize screenings of *Poor Little Rich Girl*, *Outer and Inner Space*, and *Chelsea Girls* in Austin in 2003. In 2007, my department also supplied the funds for a screening of some Warhol films, and for that I ordered *Camp* (1965) and *I, A Man* (1967).

away from watching the films feeling like I hadn't really seen them at all. My notebooks reflected that paradox; my writings narrated what I had seen on the screen, not what I actually perceived about the films. And if, as Michael Baxandall has posited, "what one offers in a description is a representation of thinking about a picture more than a representation of a picture," then those notebooks held not descriptions so much as my own attempts to verbalize, as accurately as I could, the onslaught of images, and often sounds as well, unspooling before me.¹⁴ As such, my writings were not necessarily attempts to comprehend how the images actually functioned, in terms of their content or context. Perhaps because of my initial experience of watching all of the films at once, a lack of cohesion is ultimately my main impression of Warhol's films; the feeling that I took away from viewing them en masse was one of not being able to circumscribe them as a whole. This dissertation, ultimately, stands as the product of my own attempts to do more than simply record—and instead, to describe—the films I have chosen to discuss. In each of my chapters, I use descriptions of specific films to underscore how my own thinking about them has affected my choices to situate each one within specific artistic, cultural, or historical contexts. To me, focusing on one main film for each chapter helped me to focus my ideas, and to think about each film as evidence of a specific moment in time, and not as representative of a much larger body of films. Although this latter idea may be true, it is not my goal with this dissertation to arrive at a general understanding of Warhol's cinema as a whole, but rather to understand how the films I discuss might have

¹⁴ Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 5.

functioned during the specific time in which they were made. Such an understanding, I believe, enables me to think about how those films might function differently for certain spectators over time.

The films I have chosen to focus on for this dissertation, then, have little to do with establishing stylistic or temporal continuities across Warhol's output as a filmmaker. To be sure, there are technical aspects of Warhol's films that are consistent with specific periods of his career, and those aspects do seem to shift over time as he becomes more interested in a particular type of film, editing process, or collaborator. However, it is not my goal with this dissertation to historicize Warhol's filmmaking process according to those technical aspects. There are, in fact, several histories of Warhol's films that treat them as a whole in a methodical, comprehensive manner, and the authors of these histories often divide his films into phases based on the films' apparent technical developments over time. Stephen Koch was perhaps the first to do this when he divided Warhol's films into "silents" and "talkies" of 1963–64, with later chapters devoted to Warhol's epic *Chelsea Girls* (1966) and his more seemingly commercial endeavors, such as *Lonesome Cowboys* (1968).¹⁵ The structure of my own dissertation does follow a linear chronology, beginning with an analysis of an early silent film and ending with a

¹⁵ Koch, *Stargazer*. Other histories of Warhol's films that break his film output into categories include Peter Gidal's relatively brief but straightforward, chronological history in *Andy Warhol Films and Paintings: The Factory Years* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971) and J. J. Murphy, *The Black Hole of the Camera: The Films of Andy Warhol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), which includes chapters such as "The Early Films of Andy Warhol: Obeying the Machine," "Films Made with Chuck Wein: Mind Games," and "The Sexploitation Films: Enticing the Raincoat Crowd." The most ambitious undertaking to produce a comprehensive account of Warhol's films is likely *The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, the first volume of which is Angell's *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*. The project is still underway, with John G. Hanhardt as the general editor, and Bill Horrigan and Bruce Jenkins slated as co-authors of the second volume.

chapter devoted to *Lonesome Cowboys*. But, as I hope will become apparent, each chapter also stands on its own as an investigation into a particular aspect of the history and culture which informed the production and the reception of the films I discuss, and the histories I have written in many ways do not cohere as a logical, linear progression based on ideas of technical progress or stylistic development.

After watching Warhol's films and realizing that I needed to frame my own ideas more clearly, my next step was to decide how to situate them within particular cultural and historical contexts. Eventually, the ideas about queerness and amphetamines that I had toyed with in the Crimp seminar returned. It's no secret that speed was ubiquitous in Warhol's Factory, but in the course of my research I had not found any probing discussion of how the drug may have contributed to the creative production of Warhol's paintings or films. As I began studying the drug and collecting various published anecdotes and asides by participants in Warhol's crowd, it became clear that not only were the drugs responsible for a specific attitude or worldview amongst the Factory regulars, but the amphetamines also aligned with specific aspects of Warhol's own aesthetic. Repetition and the long duration of some of the films--or alternatively, a fragmentary and aggressive approach to sensory overload, as was the case with his multimedia projects—all seemed to lead back to Warhol's and his associates' abiding devotion to the effects produced by the habitual use of amphetamines. The actors who perform for Warhol's camera also exhibit, especially in the mid-1960s, behaviors associated with prolonged amphetamine use (aggressiveness, incessant talking, impatience, paranoia, nervousness, euphoria, or sleeplessness, to name a few)—not to

mention the several instances during films that portray the taking of drugs or the discussion of drugs. This is not to say that the drugs were the only cause of this particular amphetamine aesthetic, as I describe it in my second chapter. As films like *Afternoon* (1965) and *Chelsea Girls* (1966), or the multimedia events known as the Exploding Plastic Inevitable (1966) suggest, Warhol and his Factory gravitated toward speed because it crystallized their own particular brand of alienation—both from mainstream culture, and often from their own families because of their refusal or inability to conform to prescribed gender, sexuality, or class roles that were prevalent in the mid-20th century United States.

So, rather than thinking simply about the material circumstances that led to the production of Warhol's films, such as film length, or the actors or collaborators involved, I began to think about the films, in particular his 1965 film *Afternoon*, as evidence of an amphetamine culture that was a prominent feature of Warhol's Factory in the mid-1960s, as well as of greater New York and even, on a broader scale, the entire United States. As a result of my research into the history of the amphetamine industry in the 20th century and the drug's psychological and cultural effects, I was able to extrapolate, from my dry, written notes carefully focused descriptions of this amphetamine culture as embodied in specific films. These descriptions in turn served to illustrate and guide my thinking about the particular temporal and aesthetic implications of living the life of a speed freak in New York City, and how those implications might then lead to a greater understanding of how Warhol's films might function politically—as documents of a community that

embraced and even preferred the bad feelings and discomfort that were part and parcel of their own choices to live a life outside of normative boundaries.

One of the main features of the amphetamine community associated with Warhol's Factory was its engagement with an alternative temporality, or "drugtime." I have borrowed this term from the film critic Parker Tyler, who used "drugtime" in a 1967 article on Warhol's films to refer to how the long duration of some of the films might mimic, for a spectator, the experience of being on drugs. (In Tyler's case, although he does mention speed, the main drug in question was marijuana.)¹⁶ My thinking about this concept has also been informed by several scholars' theorizations of queer temporality. The story of Warhol's Factory is in many ways a story of people who lived their lives according to what Judith Halberstam has identified as "rapid bursts" of "ludic temporality."¹⁷ Although my own considerations of Halberstam's and others' theories of

¹⁶ Parker Tyler, "Dragtime and Drugtime, or Film à la Warhol," *Evergreen Review* 11, no. 46 (April 1967): 28–29, 87–88.

¹⁷ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005). Halberstam identifies queer temporality as any conception of time that subverts or departs from normative timelines, e.g. the 8-hour per day, 40-hour work week, or the longer trajectory of the span of a lifetime marked by heteronormative temporal landmarks—adolescence, marriage, childbirth, retirement, and death. Halberstam argues that such a model imposed upon queer subjects automatically devalues the activities that often comprise queer lives, in which subjects often fail to attain the temporal markers of success:

we create longevity as the most desirable future, applaud the pursuit of long life (under any circumstances), and pathologize modes of living that show little or no concern for longevity. Within the life cycle of the Western human subject, long periods of stability are considered to be desirable, and people who live in rapid bursts (drug addicts, for example) are characterized as immature and even dangerous. But the ludic temporality created by drugs...reveals the artificiality of our privileged constructions of time and activity. (Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 4.)

Other texts that theorize queer temporality are Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, and the special issue of *GLQ* on Queer Temporality, which includes articles by Carolyn Dinshaw, Kathryn Bond Stockton, José Muñoz, and others (Elizabeth Freeman, ed. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 13:2–3 [2007]). For another take on queer temporality in Warhol's films, see Homay King, "Girl Interrupted: The Queer Time of Warhol's Cinema," *Discourse* 8:1 (Winter 2006), pp. 98–120.

queer temporality have been a point of departure for my thinking about Warhol's films and the relationship between temporality and identity, I hesitate to designate the temporality I describe as necessarily queer. My ambivalence is due to my resistance to essentializing a conception of time that may not have been considered queer by those who practiced it in the 1960s. Another complication of designating drugtime as queer is that amphetamine use was so pervasive during the 1960s that to label it as queer is to close off the potentiality of drugtime being applicable to other groups and experiences, some of which might at this point be unnameable—and this is at the heart of my own interest in historicizing amphetamine use.

My conception of drugtime is nevertheless also in dialogue with a broader discourse on queer futurity, some of which deals with a self-destructive or anti-futurity present in some works of art and literature. Most important for my own thinking about Warhol and his films in this regard has been Heather Love's book *Feeling Backward*, in which she summarizes the subjects of her own study as:

almost unrecognizable as versions of political subjectivity. Although we may have become attuned over the past several years to forms of radical politics that are not celebratory, we still have not yet begun to image a politics that allows for damage.¹⁸

It is my hope that my own work on the role of speed in Warhol's factory might make way for thinking about such a politics of damage. And although the temporality I describe in

¹⁸ Love, "Epilogue," *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 162. For more on queer futurity and impulses toward self-destruction or a resistance to "reproductive futurism," see Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). For a self-proclaimed "utopic" counter to Edelman's thesis, see José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

my chapter might not qualify in my mind as queer, this dissertation as a whole does seek to participate in a larger dialogue that identifies Warhol's films, as well as many of his contemporaries' films, as reflective of a queer sensibility in the 1960s. My work on Warhol's films is indebted to the pioneering work of such scholars as the editors of the seminal book *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*—Jonathan Flatley, Jennifer Doyle, and José Esteban Muñoz—as well as the scholars Marc Siegel and Crimp, among many others. Crimp's book "*Our Kind of Movie*" *The Films of Andy Warhol*, the early iterations of which influenced my own motivations to begin this project, is, in fact, the necessary queer antidote to readings of Warhol's films such as J. J. Murphy's that measure Warhol's films' historical and artistic significance according to already established and hegemonic structures of cinematic quality, such as adherence to narrative structure, deliberate or virtuosic directorial style, or adept editing technique. Crimp, by contrast, examines a specific selection of Warhol's films and considers them in terms of their implications as queer films and how they might help us as viewers to achieve a deeper understanding of, for instance, the mechanics of shame, of desire, and the radical potential of collaboration. Through his analyses, which as a whole deny the possibility, or the necessity, of a comprehensive understanding of Warhol's entire cinematic corpus, Crimp unlocks the films' potential as vehicles of political potency, not just as fodder for "'commonsense' attitudes" about Warhol and his artworks, as Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley and José Esteban Muñoz identify them in their Introduction to *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*. Such attitudes, they argue, underlie the majority of Warhol scholars' approaches to their studies of the artist's life and work—approaches that refuse to take into account

Warhol's homosexuality, and all that such an identification in the mid-twentieth century might have entailed.¹⁹

One of my goals with my third chapter—an extended analysis of *Lonesome Cowboys*, which Warhol and his crew filmed on location in Arizona in early 1968—is to complicate the relationship between Warhol's films and Hollywood conventions of genre and narrative and to think about how those involved in the filmmaking process utilized the political potentialities inherent in playing with those conventions. I interpret *Lonesome Cowboys* not in terms of its resistance to or even imitation of Hollywood, but rather as an example of how those who participated in its production utilized Hollywood's conventions to transform their daily lives for the duration of the filming. The mass media and critical reception of *Lonesome Cowboys* after the film's original theatrical release in 1968 suggests that the film was intended to be a parody of the Western genre. While this is partially true, designations such as “parody” or “spoof” do little to elucidate the larger project of *Lonesome Cowboys* as a movie and as a space for its participants to engage in what Ann Reynolds has called a “structure of creativity”—an

¹⁹ Doyle, Flatley and Muñoz explain that a main goal of the collection of essays that make up *Pop Out* is to “call out and combat the degaying of Warhol.” They cite the critic Robert Hughes as a specific culprit of such a categorical refusal to acknowledge Warhol's queerness, but other scholars, such as Thomas Crow, Benjamin Buchloch, and to a certain extent Hal Foster and Annette Michelson also, I believe, could fall under this rubric of “‘commonsense’ attitudes,” in the sense that these scholars are basically the progenitors of a dominant academic discourse on Warhol, and their writings tend not to foreground the role that Warhol's queerness might have played in his artistic production. An excellent example of each of these scholars' various approaches to Warhol has been collected in Annette Michelson, ed. *Andy Warhol* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001). My categorization of these scholars as proponent of such “commonsense” attitudes is not to say that their work does not have value; on the contrary, many of my own ideas about the bad feelings associated with amphetamine use are indebted to Foster's theorization of the different registers of trauma that manifest in Warhol's early silkscreens. Likewise, Michelson's theories on the relationship of avant-garde film to surrealism is foundational for my own arguments in my chapter on *Lonesome Cowboys*. (Foster, “Death in America,” in *Andy Warhol*, ed. Annette Michelson, 69–90; Annette Michelson, “Film and the Radical Aspiration,” in *Film Culture Reader*, ed. P. Adams Sitney [New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000], 404–422.)

interaction with the film and with the surrounding environment that is not necessarily legible to those outside of it.²⁰ I understand the boundary between the space in front of Warhol's camera and the action that takes place beyond it as fluid, and even in some cases arbitrary, for many of those who were involved in or witnessed the production of Warhol's films. My analysis of *Lonesome Cowboys* establishes the film within a specific historical and physical context—the desert outside Tucson, Arizona in 1968. For those who participated in *Lonesome Cowboys*, that particular context provided an environment in which the conventions of the Western genre could become enmeshed with the already established relationships among cast and crew and between outsiders and locals. As a result of the participants' disregard for the boundary between performing and simply living their lives, even people such as bystanders or other locals, as well as members of Warhol's group who may not be visible in the film's final cut, are nevertheless integral to the project of the film and even to the experience of the movie as it exists now.

The Arizona desert provided a physical backdrop for the actors to try on and play with stereotypical Hollywood Western language, plotlines, and character types, all of which they were familiar with from the proliferation of Western movies and television shows made during the 1940s, 1950s, and into the 1960s.²¹ Furthermore, because

²⁰ Ann Reynolds, "A Structure of Creativity," in *Ruth Vollmer 1961–1978: Thinking The Line*, ed. Nadja Rottner and Peter Weibel. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 55.

²¹ See Andre Bazin, "The Evolution of the Western," in *The Western Reader*, ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman (New York: Limelight Editions, 1998), 49–56; Philip French, *Westerns* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 2005); J. Hoberman, "How the Western Was Lost," in *The Western Reader*, 85–92; Kitses, Jim. "The Western: Ideology and Archetype," in *Focus on the Western*, ed. Jack Nachbar (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974) 64–72; and David Lusted, *The Western* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2003).

Lonesome Cowboys was made outside New York and in a rather rural setting, a clear physical and temporal boundary exists between the film's production and reception—between inside (Warhol's own community, the participants in his films) and outside (everybody else, including later audiences of the film). However, this boundary between inside and outside would not have been immediately visible to audiences who read the film simply as a parody of the Western genre. In *Lonesome Cowboys*, genre allows spectators to identify a more-or-less conventional narrative, and the recognizable tropes of that genre can serve to confirm their belief that they have access to the function of the film—to Warhol and his collaborators' ultimate intention. Therefore, the film's underlying function for the community that made it, as a means for enacting a way of life that reached beyond the physical confines of the space in front of the camera, could easily remain invisible to outsiders unless they choose to look beyond the conventions of genre, or to see the use of genre as one of many variables in a much more complex cinematic project.

A scene from *Lonesome Cowboys* that has served as a sort of catalyst for my own thinking about the film in relation to the worlds it creates is a scene in which the eponymous cowboys attack and rape Viva. The action on screen is at once violent and playful, and, because of this and other circumstances of its production, some of which are visible in the film and some of which are not, the scene is open-ended and irreconcilable in terms of a single, stable interpretation. Furthermore, the rest of the film does little to resolve the many contradictory actions that take place onscreen during the rape scene. For me, this scene is provocative because of the way it relates to another scene from

underground film that includes a so-called rape: the attack of Judith Malina by a cadre of vampire-like creatures in Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* (1963). Marc Siegel, Susan Sontag, P. Adams Sitney, J. Hoberman, and Parker Tyler all identify this scene in *Flaming Creatures* as a rape, but qualify that identification by acknowledging that the rape is also an orgy.²² Most of them emphasize that the absence of a cohesive narrative in *Flaming Creatures* makes it difficult to describe the film in any conventional way. Because of this, the writers' own identifications of the scene in question often lack conviction—the terms “rape” and “orgy” seem like placeholders or shorthand for something too ambiguous and contradictory to articulate with precision. Some of the writers—Sontag and Tyler in particular—suggest that the film is the embodiment or enactment of an entirely new sexuality. They employ terms like “intersexuality” or “monosexuality” in attempts to make sense of (or in Sontag's case, “to *defend*”) the film.²³ The term that comes closest to capturing the action on screen is, to my mind, not

²² Marc Siegel, “Documentary that Dare/Not Speak Its Name: Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*,” *Between the Sheets, In the Streets: Queer, Lesbian, Gay Documentary*, ed. Chris Holmlund and Cynthia Fuchs (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 91–106; P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943–2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 336; Susan Sontag, “Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*” (1964), in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 227; Parker Tyler, *Screening the Sexes: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 237.

²³ Sontag: “The truth is that *Flaming Creatures* is much more about intersexuality than about homosexuality ... the important fact about the figures in Smith's film is that one cannot easily tell which are men and which are women.” (Sontag, “Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*,” 230); Tyler: “While this ‘ritual’ rape is proceeding ... some of the transvestites also get naked, only to expose organs seemingly incapable of erection. There are enigmatic nuances here, perhaps personal with their creator, Jack Smith ... but rather, I believe, based on an instinctive sort of monosexuality.” (Tyler, *Screening the Sexes*, 237.) As Siegel notes, Caryl Rowe, writing about *Flaming Creatures* in his 1982 book *The Baudelairian Cinema*, identified the film as an example of “pansexuality.” (Siegel, “Documentary that Dare/Not Speak Its Name,” 102, quoting Caryl Rowe, *The Baudelairian Cinema: A Trend within the American Avant-Garde* [Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982], xi.) J. Hoberman also considers all of the terms that had been applied to *Flaming Creatures*' sexuality: “Projecting intersexuality, monosexuality, homosexuality, no sexuality, just sexuality, it is a spectacle inspired by the utopian confusion between filmmaker and audience.” (J. Hoberman, “The

rape or orgy at all, but J. Hoberman's more abstract "ravishment," a word that connotes violence and ecstasy simultaneously.²⁴

Although *Flaming Creatures* and *Lonesome Cowboys* operate in very different visual modes, the two scenes in question function similarly, because ultimately they are, as Marc Siegel has described *Flaming Creatures*, unknowable to audiences who were not already insiders within the world represented onscreen:

What finally makes Smith's creatures so threatening is that they are not offered up to knowledge. *Flaming Creatures* is not an insider's view into a subculture. There is no attempt to depict or appeal to a belief in an objective social reality. Instead there is only the suggestive power of the creatures' movements, a complex "visual truth" that elicited laughter from some and violence from others ... Uninterested in containing his creatures within a narrative, within a name, Smith instead releases them into an excursion of beauty. Without a tour guide, or a "voice of God," cops and critics were left to fend for themselves.²⁵

What makes Warhol's treatment of the sexual violence in *Lonesome Cowboys* different from Smith's, though, is that Warhol does offer his actors "up to knowledge," so that audiences who are familiar with the Western genre can at least find something familiar to follow in terms of (albeit messy) dialogue, style or narrative—but the knowledge he proffers is to a certain extent a false front. Warhol's adherence to the conventional character types of the Western suggests to theatrical audiences across the country that they should, somehow, be able to know or to recognize some sort of logic to the action on the screen. And in a way, many of the film's scenes were legible to those audiences on

Big Heat: Making and Unmaking *Flaming Creatures*," in *Flaming Creature: Jack Smith and His Amazing Life and Times*, ed. Edward Leffingwell, Carole Kismaric, and Marvin Heiferman (Long Island City, NY: The Institute for Contemporary Art/P.S. 1, 1997), 165.

²⁴ J. Hoberman, "The Big Heat," 156.

²⁵ Siegel, "Documentary that Dare/Not Speak Its Name," 98.

that superficial level.²⁶ But beneath this surface of genre convention, Warhol has also represented an ultimately unknowable world, and within the theaters that screened *Lonesome Cowboys*, at least some of those who were watching probably recognized that they did not have full access to that world—just as Siegel describes the audience’s recognition of being denied access to the world represented in *Flaming Creatures*.

The similarities between *Lonesome Cowboys* and *Flaming Creatures* that I am drawing out here have allowed me think about *Lonesome Cowboys*, in spite of its wide release, not so much as Warhol’s attempt to appeal to Hollywood in his later career—which is the context in which most scholars who discuss this film place it—but as a critical part of a more local history of 1960s avant-garde or underground film.²⁷ In my chapter on *Lonesome Cowboys*, I identify the film as having affinities with films that 1960s critics such as Annette Michelson and Parker Tyler would have identified as

²⁶ I discuss the critical reaction to *Lonesome Cowboys* during 1968 and 1969 in detail in my third chapter. To be sure, the critical reactions to Warhol’s film were quite different from Smith’s; although both films were involved with legal repercussions due to accusations that the films were obscene, *Lonesome Cowboys* never elicited the impassioned reactions by critics who believed that the seizure of *Flaming Creatures* somehow represented an attack on art by moralistic oppressors. The reasons for this probably have to do with the climate of avant-garde film criticism in 1964, when *Flaming Creatures* was put on trial, as compared to 1968, when *Lonesome Cowboys* was, but there are many other circumstances that probably also caused this contrast in reactions, including where the trials took place geographically (New York for *Flaming Creatures*; Atlanta for *Lonesome Cowboys*), which probably contributed to the availability of avant-garde film critics to offer firsthand reports of the seizure of Warhol’s film. Of course, another factor has to do with exactly what I am arguing: that Warhol’s film seemed somehow more harmless or less incendiary than Smith’s, since it was cloaked in the trappings of a recognizable genre. For more on the Atlanta seizure of Warhol’s film, see Margia Kramer, *Andy Warhol et al. The FBI File on Andy Warhol* (New York: UnSub Press, 1988), 42–56.

²⁷ David Bourdon claims, “Warhol and Morrissey, sharing the same desire to make a hit movie that would turn into a box-office bonanza, decided to film a Western and to shoot it entirely outdoors, on location in Arizona.” (Bourdon, *Warhol*, 269.) Angell situates *Lonesome Cowboys* within an evolving process by Warhol of “bridging the growing gap between his artistic and money-making interests.” She explains that *Lonesome Cowboys* was the first film to get distributed by a commercial distributor (the company Sherpix), and that from then on all Warhol’s films were released widely in commercial movie theaters. (Angell, “Andy Warhol, Filmmaker,” 138–139.) As Angell suggests, the later films including *Lonesome Cowboys* do not exist in opposition to Warhol’s earlier, exclusively artistic ventures, but rather as a bridge—as works of art that are also commercial.

informed by surrealist cinema. In particular I discuss *Lonesome Cowboys* in terms of Michelson's concept of "immanence," a fusing of fantasy and reality whose visual characteristics fall more on the side of what might qualify as realism—a realistic representation of the fantastic.²⁸

To discuss *Lonesome Cowboys*, or really any of Warhol's films, as surrealist—at least to identify Warhol's films as participating in a surrealist legacy that traces back to the films of, for instance, Dalí and Buñuel, or Cocteau—may seem like a bit of a stretch. These surrealist filmmakers were masters of visual metaphor, and they employed fairly straightforward editing techniques to produce arresting images of dreamlike worlds that suspended principles of gravity, time, or logic. Warhol's films, on the other hand, are decidedly of this world; they may sometimes move in slow motion, but time in a Warhol film never moves any way but forward (sometimes seemingly interminably), and its images never refer to anything but themselves (except perhaps for the occasional banana). Writing in 1964, Jonas Mekas said of watching Warhol's early silent films:

A strange thing occurs. The world becomes transposed, intensified, electrified. We see it sharper than before. Not in dramatic, rearranged contexts and meanings, not in the service of something else (even Cinéma Vérité did not escape this subjection of the objective reality to ideas) but as pure as it is in itself: eating as eating, sleeping as sleeping, haircut as haircut.²⁹

There is seemingly no marriage of concrete visual image and metaphor or dreamlike scenario in Warhol's films. In fact, as Mekas suggests, the opposite occurs: we become

²⁸ Michelson, "Film and the Radical Aspiration," 411.

²⁹ Jonas Mekas, "Sixth Independent Film Award" (1964), in *Film Culture Reader*, 427.

more aware of the finality of the object before us as the thing and nothing but the thing. Rather than metaphor, we get “intensified” tautology.

And yet I do believe that a vein of surrealism runs through many of Warhol’s films, even his early silent works, and the last chapter I wrote is, in part, an exploration of how exactly spectators, who are watching Warhol’s films today and who are invested in imagining Warhol’s relationship to histories of both avant-garde and more mainstream Hollywood cinema, might recognize and interpret those surrealist tendencies. It is necessary here for me to explain that during this stage of my project, Warhol’s films, which had served as my main primary resources up to this point, faded temporarily into the background as my thinking about surrealist cinema’s relationship to 1960s underground films intensified. Two factors contributed to this new development: a fellowship at the University of Texas’ humanities archive the Harry Ransom Center, and my participation in a graduate seminar taught by my advisor, Ann Reynolds, which focused on 1960s avant-garde cinema’s surrealist antecedents. During that seminar, I began to understand how historical surrealism may have had an effect not only on avant-garde filmmaking trends in the 1960s, but on the way critics during that decade were thinking about contemporaneous movements in other visual arts, and how film might have informed those discourses as well. The writings of Parker Tyler became crucial to me at this point in the writing of my dissertation, and since the bulk of his archive resides at the Ransom Center, I created a project during my fellowship that allowed me to sift through his copious papers, many of which remain uncatalogued.

Tyler's film criticism and his writing on 1960s underground film had for years provided me with a welcome alternative to more canonical interpretations of 1960s avant-garde film by writers such as P. Adams Sitney or David James.³⁰ Tyler's writing was eclectic, emotive, often obtuse, and his references—to Dada and surrealist experimental films, but also to contemporary 1960s Hollywood films—were sprawling and sometimes obscure. But when I read more of his early art and film criticism, especially his books

³⁰ Sitney's *Visionary Film* is now a classic of avant-garde film history. His taxonomy of a large selection of avant-garde films made in Europe and the U.S. from the 1940s through the 1960s include categories based on literature and poetry, including the "Imagist," "lyrical," and "mythopoeic" film. The filmmakers Maya Dere,, Kenneth Anger, Stan Brakhage, and Curtis Harrington, among others, figure prominently in his book. Sitney's chapter on the "structural film," a category that he formulated himself and which involves a formally rigorous approach to filmmaking that uses the properties of the camera essentially as the restrictive boundaries of the film's final structure, is the only part of his book that contains a substantial reference to Warhol. His discussion of Warhol's *Sleep* and *Beauty #2* as a precursor to structural films proper also contains a seemingly pithy statement about Warhol's approach to filmmaking: "He simply turned the camera on and walked away." (P. Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943–2000* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2002] 349.) With this statement, Sitney suggests that Warhol was apathetic toward the filmmaking process and its potentialities as a means for engaging with his chosen subjects. Sitney's interpretation is, I believe, is quite misleading. Furthermore, such a statement explains very little about how Warhol actually made his films. David James's essay "Andy Warhol: The Producer as Author" is more insightful than Sitney's as an analysis of Warhol's filmmaking practice, but to me his categories of Warhol's film practice, like those of Koch and Murphy discussed above, ring somewhat false, or at least too essentializing:

(1) an investigation of the process of being photographed and of being made the object of film, (2) the construction and fragmentation of artificial selves by means of roles appropriated from film history or metaphorically related in some other way to Hollywood, and (3) the representation of exhibitionism and spectatorship in the narratives of feature films which themselves approach Hollywood's formal and economic terrain. The photographic apparatus has throughout a double role; on the one hand it is the means of reproduction, and on the other it is the signifier of mass industrial reproduction, both metaphor and metonym for Hollywood, holding out the promise of mass consumption and thus the means of negotiating a private event into a public spectacle. It promises the transformation of an individual into a star. (David James, "Andy Warhol: Producer as Author," in *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 68.)

There is nothing objectionable in James's analysis, and his essay has been widely influential to scholars engaging with Warhol's films. But James's discussions of spectatorship, the role of the camera, celebrity, and mass culture are arguments that to me have already been well trod by scholars and critics. Furthermore, his framework of a binary opposition between avant-garde and commercial Hollywood films is problematic to me as well, as I have discussed above (see n. 27). James also never clarifies who exactly his spectator is, and thus comes dangerously close to Meaghan Morris's characterization of the spectator as "the textually delegated, allegorical emblem of the critic's own activity." (Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies," 158.)

The Hollywood Hallucination (1944) and *Magic and the Myth of the Movies* (1947), I realized that Tyler's perspective had been shaped by his own interest in and involvement with surrealism, which informed his theories about Hollywood cinema and its effects on the spectator. For Tyler, films and artworks had never been discrete entities immune to the conditions of their viewing, and the surrealist effects of the cinema had less to do with the technique of the filmmaker, and more with the way the viewer chooses to read the films before him.

Tyler's status as a film critic by the 1960s was firmly established. Beginning in the 1940s, he wrote essays and reviews of films for the American magazine *View*, which he eventually co-edited with his friend Charles Henri Ford. That publication exposed its readers to artistic and literary trends in European modernism, with a particular emphasis on poetry and art, and especially surrealism.³¹ Relatively early in his career, Tyler, who by this time had already published the novel *The Young and Evil* (1933), which he wrote in collaboration with Ford, as well as several poems, also began publishing books on film.³² These early film books focused almost exclusively on Hollywood studio pictures, but his perspective on Hollywood was decidedly unorthodox. Tyler was an active art critic; he wrote regular reviews for *Art News* for decades, and he believed that Hollywood movies were works that critics or viewers might interpret much as they do a work of art—

³¹ For more on *View* and its significance within the context of early 20th century little magazines and its relationship to Surrealism, see Charles Henri Ford, ed., *View: Parade of the Avant-Garde: 1940–1947* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991); and Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde: 1920–1950* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995).

³² For biographical information on Tyler, see Charles Boultenhouse, "Parker Tyler's Own Scandal." *Film Culture* 77 (Fall 1992): 10–23; and Steven Watson, Introduction to *The Young and Evil* (New York: Masquerade Books, 1996);

—a truly radical idea for the United States in the 1940s.³³ Furthermore, Tyler was a proponent of a very subjective technique for evaluating art, based on the personal experiences of the viewer. As such, when discussing his impressions of an artwork or a film, he often subordinated questions of formal quality to impressions based on the content the forms suggest in the mind of the viewer. His evaluations were therefore subject to any number of random mental associations. Hollywood film, for Tyler, was in some ways the perfect object for this type of spectatorship because, unlike most works of art, Hollywood studio pictures were the result of an inherently collaborative process and therefore not the product of one single artist with one single intention. Tyler explains his interest in Hollywood films in the Preface to his 1947 book *Magic and the Myth of the Movies*:

The lack of individual control in movie-making in this country, the absence of respect for the original work, the premise that a movie is an ingenious fabrication of theoretically endless elasticity—all these positive and negative elements make for lack of form (or art) and specifically encourage the spontaneous growth of popular forms (“what the public wants”), thus leaving crevices for whatever there be in actor, dialogue, writer, cinematic trick shot, or directorial fantasy to creep through and flower.³⁴

Additionally, Tyler believes that these elements that “creep through and flower” in Hollywood films are actually poetic; in other words, the poetic aspects of films occur in spite of, or even because of, their finished appearance on the screen, that final appearance being the product of attempts to please general audiences and not to adhere to fine art standards of artistic quality. In a 1944 radio interview to promote his first book, *The*

³³ He was one of the few critics, in fact, to review Andy Warhol’s 1956 show of drawings at Bodley Gallery. See Parker Tyler, review of Bodley Gallery show, *ARTNews* 55 (December 1956): 59.

³⁴ Parker Tyler, “Preface,” *Magic and the Myth of the Movies* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), xiv.

Hollywood Hallucination, Tyler elaborates on his idea that visually poetic elements in movies can sometimes appear spontaneously, due to the filmmakers' lack of intentionality. The interviewer's questions are in italics:

Mr. Tyler, what prompted you, a poet of the modern school, to write a book on Hollywood?

There are two good and simple reasons... first, I—for one—find that even bad movies can have poetic elements; second, I have always been fascinated by the movie medium, having gone to see the movies, like many other Americans, since I was quite small.

You say “poetic elements in bad movies”—how is that?

Perhaps I should describe the basic premise on which I have written my book. I believe that the American movie, as an art form, is highly irresponsible, both because it must please such a large, heterogeneous audience, and because the super-complexity of its type of production makes its final form uncontrollable... but my special point is that the shallowness and vulgarity of many movies, and their diffused way of being put together, often lead to casual, fugitive, but strangely beautiful effects. Roughly, I should say that to be aware of such effects requires a will, so to speak, to read “between the lines,” to see what is there, but wasn't consciously put there by the movie makers.³⁵

Here Tyler places the onus of interpretation squarely on the spectator of a film—not on its filmmakers, whom he clearly believes are unable, for a number of reasons, to control how spectators experience the film.

It seems that Tyler's belief in a causal relationship between Hollywood filmmakers' irresponsibility and their films' beauty carried over somewhat to his readings of what he would later call “underground film” in his own history of the experimental

³⁵ Warren Bowen, “Interview with Parker Tyler.” 29 May, 1944. My quotation takes into account Tyler's own editorial marks on the original typescript. Folder 11.5, Parker Tyler Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. It almost goes without saying here that Tyler's directive to “read ‘between the lines’” is a queer one—his own status as rather openly homosexual and his lifelong defiance of such categories as “gay” or “straight” suggest that from a young age, Tyler had become very adept at discerning meanings hidden below the surface—in art and in life—and that he was comfortable with assuming that meanings based on the appearance of any object are usually unstable.

films of the 1960s, *Underground Film: A Critical History*, published in 1969. In this book, Tyler makes it clear that he believes that very few underground films merit a formally rigorous evaluation; most films would in fact fail miserably when judged in this manner. For instance, Tyler argues that typical of underground films is a tendency toward what he calls “fetish footage”— filmmakers’ self-indulgent, artless impulse to screen lengths of raw, unedited or barely edited film showing subjects of no apparent interest, and to linger on them “compulsively, whimsically, endlessly.”³⁶ For Tyler, the proliferation of fetish footage and other practices that willfully ignore craftsmanship have led to a lack of films that comply with conventional standards of quality: “I do not mean that all of [the underground films] fail to be transiently entertaining—far from it—yet they are very uneven in quality and lack importance *as films*.”³⁷ Instead of completely dismissing underground films, Tyler decides to evaluate them from his own spectatorial perspective, and he attempts to “read ‘between the lines’” in order to understand the underground on its own terms. Tyler ultimately identifies underground films as the products of their makers’ own convoluted conceptions of the legacies of surrealism, and he characterizes the filmmakers as promoters of a pro-drug, anti-Establishment aesthetic, which accounts for their films’ lack of technical competence.

Tyler seems to have understood that like Hollywood films, Warhol’s films also achieved effects that were not “consciously put there by the movie makers.” In fact, for Tyler nothing much at all seemed deliberate in Warhol’s films. Around 1966, Tyler wrote

³⁶ Parker Tyler, *Underground Film: A Critical History* (1969) (New York: De Capo Press, 1995), 15.

³⁷ Tyler, *Underground Film*, 24.

two versions of an essay on Andy Warhol's cinema. The earlier version, which was never published, Tyler titled "Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?"; the later version would eventually appear as "Dragtime and Drugtime, or Film à la Warhol" in the September 1967 issue of *Evergreen Review*.³⁸ Both essays encapsulate nicely Tyler's ambivalence about the significance of Warhol's contributions to underground film in the 1960s, and they serve as precursors to his more extended discussions of Warhol's cinema in *Underground Film*. Although Tyler often ascribed an infantile quality to Warhol's films (not necessarily a put-down in Tyler's parlance), as well as to many of the actors who appeared in them, he paid considerable attention to Warhol's film career, and often included titles such as *Kiss* and *Harlot* in his lists of essential films for avant-garde cinema programs.³⁹ In "Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Film Maker?" Tyler characterizes Warhol's cinema as an analogue to contemporary trends in avant-garde music:

It becomes obvious to term Warhol's film cinema concrèt—it's what Newsweek means by "instant film." Musique concrèt, to take a parallel, instead of offering music's old aesthetic dream, offers noise, the "music of life," which (isolated as a form, a subject for exclusive listening) calls up the whole inartistic oppressiveness

³⁸ "Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker," Uncataloged box 2, Parker Tyler Papers, University of Texas at Austin; Parker Tyler, "Dragtime and Drugtime: or, Film à la Warhol," *Evergreen Review* 11, no. 46 (April 1967): 28–29, 87–88. "Dragtime and Drugtime" contains some overlap in language with "Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?" Both essays were most likely written in 1966, because Tyler makes a reference in both to the current commercial success of *Chelsea Girls*.

³⁹ I came across several of these lists during my research of Tyler's archive. For example, Letter to a Ms. Campbell, folder 3.5, Parker Tyler Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Tyler refers to underground film as "infantile" throughout his book. What he means by this is that the films themselves, as well as their communities' attitudes toward filmmaking, are in their infancy—but also that those communities take pride in this infancy:

However kindly or unkindly viewed, it is a great big toddler, the Underground Film. Something of a small titan, it is noticeably underprivileged. This last, of course, is my own word; in the eyes of Underground ideologists this attribute is construed as the expression of a natural privilege such as 'poetic' talent. Strength in numbers is merely ancillary to such large benign theories. Shining epithets are integral with the ideological blarney of the movement, the Underground's unabashed lyricism of self-praise. In Mekas' prose it is like a fond papa's lullaby. (Tyler, *Underground Film*, 30.)

of the objective world inhabited by everyone. To give this objective world one's whole and aural attention, as if it were aesthetically listenable, is to establish a parody of the psychology of attention that we associate with beauty. Andy's films behave like *musique concrète*. Gradually they became approximate charades with approximately guessable meanings. But meanings, like "beauty" or "interest" or "charm," were still irrelevant as lucidly orientable things. The only optical dividends were literal, "concrete," the charade was a charade, boredom was boredom, horrible film making was horrible film making. That was the theoretic beauty of it.⁴⁰

Like Mekas' description of Warhol's films, Tyler seems to understand Warhol's early films as a visual tautology: what is on the screen is what is on the screen—the artist makes no attempt with his film to elicit a transcendental aesthetic experience from a spectator. On the contrary, the relationship between what is on the screen and a world beyond the screen is totally unmediated by Warhol; his approach is to "give this objective world one's whole...attention," and not to discriminate in terms of subject matter or editing. So if the film is boring, then it is because the scene that his camera captured at that moment was also boring.

Tyler goes on to say that as a general rule, the only sorts of meanings a spectator will be able attribute to Warhol's films, if he or she attempts to read beyond the literal, concrete visual images available in the film itself, are "esoteric" interpretations that likely have little to do with the image on the screen, and even less to do with the intention of Warhol. Any interpretation of the images as symbolic or metaphoric could only be a guess, based more on one's own subjective experience or wandering mind. In the published version of "Dragtime and Drugtime," Tyler speculates that the majority of audience members watching Warhol's early films, such as *Sleep* or *Eat* (both 1963),

⁴⁰ "Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?" 5-6.

would find themselves under pressure to make a decision about how to watch the film; its utter stasis would challenge their own habit of watching a movie as passive spectators.

Over time, Tyler explains, Warhol's films began to take on characteristics that prove more familiar to viewers of commercial cinema—especially elements suggesting the presence of a plot and a more manageable screening time. But for Tyler, these mid-decade sound films such as *Vinyl* and *My Hustler* (both 1965) represent not so much a stylistic breakthrough as a progression of interest on Warhol's part to include more (not better or more interesting—just more) subject matter. So even though moviegoers might find comfort in these later films because they more closely resemble what they as viewers are used to (namely movies with dialogue and at least some semblance of a story), Warhol's own approach to filmmaking remains entrenched in this concept of *cinema concret*. Even with regard to *My Hustler*, which is stylistically very different from Warhol's early silent films, Tyler attributes the “small miracle” of its second reel to this method:

A curious accident took place in ... *My Hustler*, aligning it with the objective hazard of the Surrealists. Not only does this film fall apart into two sections of very unequal aesthetic caliber, but the accident seems to have been caused by the studied inattentiveness to form typical of Warhol's *cinema concret* [sic].⁴¹

The accident to which Tyler is referring is the naturalistic ease with which the two hustlers in the film's second reel, played by Paul America and Joe Campbell (also known as the Sugar Plum Fairy), enact their respective roles as neophyte and veteran hustler as they converse with one another and incessantly groom themselves inside the tight space

⁴¹ Tyler, “Dragtime and Drugtime,” 87.

of a bathroom in a Fire Island beach house. Basically, this scene gives Tyler pleasure. He recognizes that *My Hustler*, like all Warhol films up to this point, had been made by turning the camera on and trusting that whatever happened in front of it would be exactly what it appeared to be—and that the opposite of “horrible film making was horrible film making” could also be true: beautiful film making was, sometimes, beautiful film making. And for Tyler, the beauty of *My Hustler* is due specifically to a surrealist “objective hazard,” a sort of detachment and leveling of all subjects, people and actions into equivalent values, and leaving what rises to the surface to chance: “One has a notion the directorial genius that makes everything in this true-life put-on look utterly right is a real objective hazard; I suspect it was due simply to the perfect understanding between the two performers as to just what was involved.”⁴² And what is involved, he seems to think, is not acting skill, rehearsed timing, or any other type of formal theatrical preparation or execution, but rather the actors’ own (presumably learned) knowledge about the interpersonal dynamics that necessarily arise between a young and an aging hustler as they find themselves in cramped quarters:

The dark-haired old-pro has something up his armpit, and lo and behold! it’s his own proposition to the blond in the neatest, cutest, nudest package of 42nd Street acrostic one might care to see through. It’s the bluntest gentleman-butth idiom (refrain: “What’s in it for me?”) but the import, though the blond cautiously plays innocent, is perfectly clear to the bystander: The price of giving the newcomer the old-pro’s supervaluable list of customers is the newcomer’s body delivered, in advance, to the old-pro.⁴³

⁴² Tyler, “Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?” 13–14.

⁴³ Tyler, “Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?” 14.

The relationship represented on the screen with this scene is, for Tyler, as authentic as if it were occurring in real life:

I could not detect a single false note in this plausibly adagio, subtly sotto voce scene, where for once the Warhol suspense is not clock-catered. Of course there's no plot issue, only the old power-failure stop. Yet we have seen the most delicately finished slice of true life without a shred of home theatricals. Whoever the actors are, life for them, "for real" or "let's pretend," is a sober serious thing, worth one's utmost in worldly wisdom."⁴⁴

Unlike his tautological characterization of Warhol's earlier films, Tyler recognizes that the actors' performances in this second reel of *My Hustler* seem to refer to something broader than just the circumstances of the scene, and because of this their actions contain the potential for spectators' empathy with them and with their relationship to one another. For Tyler, these hustlers are like all hustlers; he recognizes the power dynamic played out between Paul and Joe, and he finds this recognition exciting. Instead of a visual tautology, Tyler sees the potential for visual metaphor; the scene does not appear as just "the whole inartistic oppressiveness of the objective world inhabited by everyone," but opens up a range of interpretive possibilities. Yet in terms of Tyler's overall conception of Warhol's films as *cinema concrèt*, *My Hustler*'s inadvertent success is pure surrealist accident, and signifies nothing in terms of Warhol exerting more control than usual over the film's direction. In other words, the apparent authenticity achieved in the scene in question would have been impossible without the conditions set up by Warhol's "studied inattentiveness to form," which in turn conditioned viewers of his films, over time, to trust that whatever happens on the screen occurs purely by chance—

⁴⁴ Tyler, "Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?" 14.

even if it seems familiar or rehearsed.

More often than not, the actions captured by Warhol's camera, especially for his early silent films, do not conform to pre-determined or recognizable roles or power dynamics—and when they do, the roles they take on often disrupt interpretation in terms of the film's ostensible narrative or theme.⁴⁵ Instead, many of the people and the activities that appear in Warhol's films adhere more to Tyler's (and Mekas's) characterization of them as tautological: they are what they appear to be and nothing more. Tyler understood this; he does not declare *My Hustler* to be a better film than any of Warhol's other films; the scene between Paul and Joe simply represents a more recognizable aspect of traditional film and theater—actors acting like people they are not, and doing so convincingly—than many of the others. Ultimately, the success of the second reel of *My Hustler* is a secondary point to Tyler; Warhol's *cinéma concret* approach to filmmaking renders any judgments of quality based on traditional cinematic conventions—such as the continuity of narrative or symbolism of the image through scripting, montage or editing—useless as a means of comprehending the significance of Warhol's films and their relationship to a spectator. Tyler's positioning of Warhol's cinema as predicated on a “studied inattentiveness to form,” while setting it apart from such cinematic traditions, opens up new possibilities for understanding his films' relevance in relation to other avant-garde historical legacies such as surrealism, as well as their function within other contemporary art-historical and critical debates of the 1960s

⁴⁵ This statement becomes less true when Warhol introduces sound to his films, and as such there are obvious and major exceptions to this generalization, most notably in Warhol's collaborations with Ronald Tavel, whose scenarios often relied on recognizable roles for the actors, if only to dismantle them during the filming.

that also opposed formal qualifications as a means for interpreting artworks. Such discourses include not only Tyler's interpretations of underground films, but also the writings of critics like Gene Swenson, Gregory Battcock and Robert Smithson, who all used Warhol's films as exemplars for their own theories about so-called anti-formalist tendencies in contemporary art during the 1960s.⁴⁶

Tyler's formulation of Warhol's films as *cinema concret* crystallized many of the ideas I had been struggling to articulate in my own thinking about Warhol's approach to filmmaking. Furthermore, his emphasis on the role of the spectator allowed me to think about how my own experience as a viewer watching Warhol's films almost 50 years after most of them were made has affected my interpretation of the films I discuss in this dissertation, as well as how all spectators' experiences are inevitably colored by their own history and subjectivity. This realization in itself is nothing groundbreaking—but for my own project, to understand that even in the 1960s, the meanings of Warhol's films

⁴⁶ Gene Swenson, *The Other Tradition* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1966); Gregory Battcock, "Humanism and Reality—Thek and Warhol," in *The New Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1966), 235–242; Robert Smithson, "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art" (1968), in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 82–83. I discuss Swenson and Battcock extensively in my first chapter. Smithson's remarks concern Warhol's self-presentation, as well as *My Hustler*:

Serge Gavronsky writing in *Cahiers du Cinema*, No. 10, points out that Warhol employs a kind of self-inventing dialogue in his films ... Gavronsky points out the "dis-synchronized talk," "monosyllabic English," and other "tropistic" effects. The language has no force, it's not very convincing—all the pornographic preoccupations collapse into verbal deposits, or what is called in communication theory "degenerative information." Warhol's syntax forces an artifice of sadomasochism that mimics its supposed "reality." Even his surfaces destroy themselves. (Smithson, "A Museum of Language," 82.)

Smithson's characterization of Warhol's language as highly artificial falls in line with Smithson's attempts in his criticism to combat formalist criticism's claims to evaluating art based on metrics of artistic purity. For Smithson, all art was artifice, and he favored those artworks that foregrounded artifice, rather than hiding behind a mask of supposed naturalism based on purity of form. See Chelsea Weathers, *From Parmigianino to Andy Warhol or Conceptions of Mannerism in the 1960s as Reflected in the Writings of Robert Smithson* (MA Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2005).

were not fixed, but depended on who the particular spectators were, the context in which they were viewing the films, as well as the conditions of their viewing, landed me, ironically, right back where I had started in terms of my original concept for my dissertation. All of my chapters, in one way or another, take into account unique perspectives of those who participated in the making and viewing of Warhol's cinema in the 1960s. And the final chapter I wrote, which actually appears first in this dissertation, is, in part, a discussion of how some of the art critics I mentioned above, particularly Swenson, interpreted Warhol's early silent films and how they employed interpretations of those films to develop their own ideas about contemporary art and criticism. But my goals with this chapter are not necessarily to interpret Warhol's films only in terms of their significance within that critical discourse. Rather, I use critics' interpretations of Warhol's early silent films to come to a better understanding of how works of art might function for those who analyze them—artists, critics, and ultimately many different viewers. As I thought more about this issue, the overarching question of this chapter became, How, ultimately, can a discussion of Warhol's films contribute to an understanding of how we as individual viewers use works of art to relate to our conceptions of history, and to the people and things we come into contact with during our everyday lives? This is actually a question that recurs throughout my dissertation, especially in my chapter on *Lonesome Cowboys*.

To think further about this issue of how each viewer's subjective viewing experiences of Warhol's films might contribute to his or her perceptions of history and of the present, I became more interested in Warhol's camera. The camera is, after all, the

device that allows us as viewers to see what we see on the screen, and it is also the instrument that cuts off our access to what is beyond its frame. During Warhol's early experimentations with cinema, he used the camera as a tool to prompt performative behaviors from his actors. A popular quotation from *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, in which he explains the effects of the tape recorder, could easily apply to the film camera:

The acquisition of the tape recorder really finished whatever emotional life I might have had, but I was glad to see it go. Nothing was ever a problem again, because a problem just meant a good tape, and when a problem transforms itself into a good tape it's not a problem any more. An interesting problem was an interesting tape. Everybody knew that and performed for the tape. You couldn't tell which problems were real and which problems were exaggerated for the tape. Better yet, the people telling you the problems couldn't decide any more if they were really having the problems or if they were just performing.⁴⁷

The recording device has the power to incite behaviors from people that allow them to detach from themselves—to think of their lives in a more objective way and even to jar them out of their own emotional attachment to their present circumstances. This idea of the objectification of emotion—of allowing feelings to assume the role of things that are somehow separate from the immediate emotional state of the person who is experiencing them—relates closely to ideas in Gene Swenson's essay for his 1966 exhibition *The Other Tradition*. The tradition that Swenson is referring to in his title is basically his own interpretation of Dada and surrealism—so again a critic watching Warhol's films in the 1960s considered surrealism an appropriate lens through which to comprehend certain aspects of Warhol's film practice. Swenson's critical framework, which he elaborates in his essay, provided me with the theoretical tools to think about and begin to understand

⁴⁷ Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 26–27.

one of Warhol's early films that had been the most difficult for me to grasp: the 1964 film *Couch*.

Couch utterly shocked me the first time I saw it, in a way that I didn't believe Warhol's films could shock me. The film's setting, Warhol's silver 47th Street Factory, was familiar to me, as were some of the players who initially appeared on screen—Naomi Levine, Billy Name, Gerard Malanga. But it quickly became obvious that this film was unlike Warhol's other early silent films. The main reason for this was simply that the sexual content was more visible, and frankly more powerful, than those other films. From everything I had read about Warhol's films, I had always assumed that Warhol's 1968 *Blue Movie*, originally entitled *Fuck*, was the first film that included a visually explicit representation of sexual penetration. And I knew as well that *Eating Too Fast*, the 1966 "sequel" to *Blow Job* (1964), pictured Gregory Battcock receiving fellatio, although when I had watched that on video, the sexual act itself wasn't particularly shocking to me. With *Couch*, though, the sex was different. The silent film and slowed projection speed, as well as the dramatic lighting of many of the reels, drew me into the film, and I became absorbed and even aroused by the sexual acts, in a way that films like *Blow Job* or *Eating Too Fast* simply did not encourage me to do. In my experience, this was especially true in the film's penultimate reel, a stark and beautifully filmed ménage-a-trois between Gerard Malanga, Kate Heliczky, and Rufus Collins.

Couch, for me, was the film that also exploded anything I had ever learned about what to expect from Warhol's films. As I watched it and re-watched it, I finally understood that there was likely nothing I would be able to say that could definitively

describe and theorize Warhol's films in a comprehensive way. And so, being a young graduate student embarking on my first long academic project, I decided not to write about the film. It wasn't until years later that I was able to address what I had seen productively or intellectually.

Ultimately, the last chapter I wrote, which deals at its most basic level with modes of representation—abstraction, literalness, the representation of emotion, how images represent ideas and how we as viewers learn to recognize those ideas through the act of seeing—is still a work in progress. These are issues that take a lifetime to work through, and they may even be unresolvable. To try to wrap my own mind around these concepts, I began thinking about Warhol's own relationship to things—namely his collecting practice. Jonathan Flatley's scholarship on Warhol's collecting and its implications for interpreting the affective underpinnings of Warhol's artistic production has proved invaluable in this regard.⁴⁸ In my own work, I am interested in how Warhol's own proclivity for "liking things," particularly old things, affected his artmaking, and particularly his approach to making films, but I am also concerned with how we as viewers might be able to think about our own roles as spectators of works that represent a time and a place that is irrevocably removed from our own. In other words, how do we relate to the worlds represented in Warhol's films? What can our affective relationships with those worlds, our own collecting of the past, tell us about how our own conceptions of history shape our everyday lives? These are questions that I explore as a spectator of

⁴⁸ Jonathan Flatley, "Liking Things," in *Possession Obsession: Andy Warhol and Collecting* (Pittsburgh: The Andy Warhol Museum, 2002), 94–103; and "Like: Collecting and Collectivity," *October* 132 (Spring 2010): 71–98.

Warhol's films, but they are also questions that I use to speculate on what Warhol's own relationship to history might have been. The first section of my chapter begins with a partially imagined scenario based on Warhol and Geldzahler's visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to look at Florine Stettheimer's *Cathedral* paintings (1929–1942) in 1963. My own recreation of Warhol's experience as a spectator of a world that no longer existed for him—animated scenes that Stettheimer filled with figures that constituted specific cultural and political communities in New York in the 1930s and early 1940s—serves, in part, as a model for my own relationship to Warhol's films. As Tyler suggests through his characterization of Hollywood films, we are always free to see and deem images significant or pregnant with meaning, even though they may not have been wholly intended to be so by their maker.

My own experience of Warhol's films, then, is just that: my own. I try in each of my chapters to identify which participants (actors, filmmakers, collaborators, spectators, and critics) I am discussing and to take responsibility for the fact that, although I am making an argument about their experiences, I am doing so at my own peril. I have based my research and my interpretations of each of the films on a number of alliances I have made to particular historical and intellectual communities, which I have discussed earlier in this Introduction. I align myself with proponents of queer interpretations of Warhol and historians and critics who, to my mind, take a queer approach to history, through unorthodox methodologies or for the purposes of political activism. The circumstances of my research—where I have viewed the films, which archives gave me the most access, which films seemed relevant during a particular phase of my own intellectual

development while thinking about this project—have also irrevocably colored my outlook on these films and my interpretations of them. As a spectator and as a scholar, instead of making my goal to become the most objective or definitive authority on Warhol's films, I have simply tried to make the best of what I have—to be aware of all these factors of circumstance as much as possible, and to create a history that resonates with me and hopefully with the communities for which it was written. When I use “we” to refer to a collective spectatorship, therefore, I am making an entreaty to my reader to attempt to see as I do, or even momentarily to see a subject from my perspective. At no point do I wish to speak for anybody else, or to assume that my interpretation has the status of ultimate truth.

Finally, I also want to articulate what I have learned about how Warhol's films function as representations, because as each of my chapters indicates, I do see the films as representations of specific artistic, cultural, and historical moments. As I have said, I believe that coming to any conclusion about Warhol's cinema as a cohesive corpus or as a collection of films that reflect a linear stylistic or technical development is bound to oversimplify Warhol's practice as a filmmaker. However, based solely on my own viewing of Warhol's films, I have noticed some consistencies across Warhol's oeuvre with regard to how the films represent their subject matter. To me, these consistencies are separate from any continuities in Warhol's filmic output that have to do with technical aspects or material factors such as what sorts of film stock, camera, or editing process he utilized, or who his collaborators were.

To put it as simply as I can, Warhol's entire filmmaking project, from my point of view at least, was an effort to represent specific moments in time as completely as possible, and to achieve this, he often orchestrated his films as scenes revolving around minor events. Many of the films from a particular period (the summer of 1965, for instance, or winter/spring of 1967) include the same people, often from different vantage points, in different contexts, or in different places. What viewers who watch several films produced during the same period may eventually understand as the actors' identities—by which I mean here the externalization of their personalities through their words and actions—are actually the sum of a series of incidents. For example, Warhol's films of Edie Sedgwick from the spring and summer of 1965, made at the peak of her and Warhol's fame and social activity, depict Sedgwick engaging in various activities at different times of day.⁴⁹ *Poor Little Rich Girl* features her waking up in the morning and preparing to go out; *Restaurant* shows Sedgwick eating at a crowded table with her friends in a noisy restaurant; *Afternoon* takes place in Sedgwick's apartment during one lazy afternoon; and the premise of *Beauty #2* is that Sedgwick has just returned from a discotheque late one night with Chuck Wein and another boy she picked up. In the

⁴⁹ Just a few of the mass media articles that covered Sedgwick and Warhol during this time are Marilyn Bender, "Edie Pops Up as Newest Superstar," *New York Times* (26 July 1965): 26; "Edie & Andy," *Time* (27 August 1965): 65–66; Nora Ephron, "Edie Sedgwick, Superstar," *New York Post Weekend Magazine* (5 September 1965): 19; Mel Jaffe, "Jet Set in the Basement," *New York Journal-American* (18 August 1965): 3; and Roger Vaughan, "Superpop or A Night at the Factory," *New York Herald Tribune* (3 August 1965): 6–9. A series of folders culled from Warhol's Time Capsules at the Warhol Museum Archive contain numerous short notices and photographs clipped from newspapers during the mid-1960s, many of which do not have citations or publication information.

aggregate, the films amount to what Callie Angell has described as a fragmentary version of a more ambitious but never realized project conceived by Warhol: to film Sedgwick engaging in everyday activities for 24 consecutive hours.⁵⁰ The overall effect of the 1965 Sedgwick films is that, after watching them all, it is possible to feel as if we actually know the person before us—her mannerisms and moods, the minutiae of her daily life, her taste in décor and clothes and food and drinks, how much she smokes, the way her mind seems to skip from subject to subject, what she does to deflect particular questions, her political views, her insecurity, her laugh.

With Warhol's films, then, we as spectators have access to the reality Warhol represents through our apprehension of the *mise-en-scène*, as well as the performers' own presentation of their personalities through their interactions with other people, or sometimes through their solo performances for the camera. And we apprehend this reality not because of—and sometimes in spite of—the work of the camera. It does not guide us in what we see. The camera in Warhol's films, in addition to being a catalyst to encourage performance by the actors, also functions in a particular way in relation to the viewer. From a spectatorial standpoint, unlike Hollywood films, Warhol's films often do not place the camera in a position of authority. It rarely has the sort of agency that we as audience members could interpret as analogous to Warhol, or even to a specific person,

⁵⁰ Angell, "Poor Little Rich Girl," *The Films of Andy Warhol: Part II* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994), 22. Sedgwick was not the only person Warhol wanted to profile for twenty-four hours, nor was this the only idea he had for a twenty-four-hour film. As Angell also explains, Warhol's epic ****, which was only screened once in its entirety, was a series of 33-minute reels of film screened consecutively, sometimes using double projection. (Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, 12.) And perhaps Warhol's most well known twenty-four-hour profile of a single person is his *a: a Novel* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), in which Warhol attempted to record Ondine for twenty-four hours. Ondine never actually made it a full twenty-four hours, but only about twelve. A team of typists transcribed the tapes into the finished book. (Lynne Tillman, "The Last Words are Andy Warhol," *Grey Room* 21 [Fall 2005]: 40.)

voyeur, or analyst—although these are all roles that scholars over the years have ascribed to it.⁵¹ The relationship of the camera to the viewer is therefore a tricky subject, and to me it occupies the crux of why Warhol's films are so difficult to describe: because we cannot consistently pin down why the camera does what it does. In short (and this is by no means a new concept in relation to Warhol) he has removed his own readable agency or objective authority as the author of his films. The view of the camera is not his view; it is nobody's view, or it is many different views. It is ultimately just the view of the camera.

Warhol's approach to constructing his films, it therefore seems, is deliberately and even aggressively arbitrary. Even the structure of his films, which often rely on the exact length of the film reels to determine their running time, are in a sense arbitrary, because those lengths of film allow Warhol not to have to make a choice about when to turn off the camera or to decide when the scene is over. For me to speculate on why Warhol chose to work in such a manner would be to attempt to formulate a theory of intentionality for Warhol as Author. But Warhol carefully obfuscated, over and over, attempts by critics and interviewers to pin down his particular motivations. Suffice it to

⁵¹ John Hanhardt equates the camera with Warhol when he says, "Because there were no planned scenarios, no directions, the camera—and by extension, the filmmaker—became passive spectators." (John G. Hanhardt, "The American Independent Cinema 1958–1964," in *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism, and Performance 1958–1964* [New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1984], 132.) Stephen Koch: "The Bolex [the 16mm camera Warhol used for his silent films] sees without blinking, its staring, dead eye endows Warhol's alienated vision with a mechanistic impersonality." (Koch, *Stargazer*, 32.) Patrick S. Smith characterizes the "long take" of Warhol's Auricon sound camera (which holds the 1200-foot rolls of film, which, when projected unedited, dictate each reel's 33-minute running time) as enacting a "voyeur's vigil." (Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films*, 156–157.) David James: "The situation [displayed by Robert Indiana's performance in *Eat*] is that of psychoanalysis; the camera is the silent analyst who has abandoned the subject to the necessity of his fantastic self-projection." (James, "The Producer as Author," 69.)

say that his intention was to obscure his intention, and in that respect he succeeded. The result of this, in the actual product of the films themselves, is a body of work that resembles in many ways Erich Auerbach's description of a particular trend in the modern novel, which he elaborates during his discussion of specific works by Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce. For Auerbach, these are writers who describe life—who represent lived reality—as a series of minor and even random events, and likewise endeavor to represent the spans of time in which these events occur as wholly and as faithfully as possible, with no detail being too insignificant.⁵² The effect of this technique is that the writer, through her description, appears to capture reality completely, and the scene portrayed mirrors back to its audience what feels like a comprehensive representation of a specific moment in time. Auerbach, explaining the approach of “those modern writers who prefer the exploitation of arbitrary everyday events, contained within a few hours and days, to the complete chronological representation of a total exterior continuum,” by which he means a structure imposed by literary stylistic conventions, could just as well be explaining the approach of Warhol in relation to the narrative and stylistic conventions of the Hollywood film:

⁵² Auerbach focuses mostly on the interior consciousness of Woolf and Proust's characters (in *To the Lighthouse* and *À la recherche du temps perdu*, respectively)—the way their minds jump from subject to subject, often randomly and rarely concerning major events, and how the author's description of their characters' experiences result in an understanding of reality by the reader that would have been unattainable if the author had focused on the narrative or other traditionally conventional literary concerns. Of course, this aspect of Auerbach's argument works for my understanding of Warhol's films only up to a point, primarily because instead of dealing with a literary medium, Warhol's films represent visual as well as, at least when he utilized sound, verbal information, and as such with the external actions, and not the interior experiences, of his actors. (Erich Auerbach, “The Brown Stocking,” *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 525–553.

they [those modern writers] ... are guided by the consideration that it is a hopeless venture to try to be really complete within the total exterior continuum and yet to make what is essential stand out. Then too they hesitate to impose upon life, which is their subject, an order which it does not possess in itself. He who represents the course of a human life, or a sequence of events extending over a prolonged period of time, and represents it from beginning to end, must prune and isolate arbitrarily. Life has always long since begun, and it is always still going on. And the people whose story the author is telling experience much more than he can ever hope to tell. But the things that happen to a few individuals in the course of a few minutes, hours, or possibly even days—these one can hope to report with reasonable completeness. And here, furthermore, one comes upon the order and the interpretation of life which arise from life itself: that is, those which grow up in the individuals themselves, which are to be discerned in their thoughts, their consciousness, and in a more concealed form in their words and actions. For there is always going on within us a process of formulation and interpretation whose subject matter is our own self. We are constantly endeavoring to give meaning and order to our lives in the past, the present, and the future, to our surroundings, the world in which we live; with the result that our lives appear in our own conception as total entities—which to be sure are always changing, more or less radically, more or less rapidly, depending on the extent to which we are obliged, inclined, and able to assimilate the onrush of new experience. These are the forms of order and interpretation which the modern writers here under discussion attempt to grasp in the random moment—not one order and one interpretation, but many, which may either be those of different persons or of the same person at different times; so that overlapping, complementing, and contradiction yield something that we might call a synthesized cosmic view or at least a challenge to the reader's will to interpretive synthesis.⁵³

To me, what Warhol has in common with the modernist novelists as Auerbach describes them above is a desire to represent a specific type of *completeness*, and such completeness does not necessarily involve order; it also necessarily involves contradiction. Contradictions and inconsistencies are inevitable with a body of work as large and sprawling as Warhol's cinema—and what's more, the events it captures and represents are in many ways simply the remainders of an entire world whose complexity we can only glimpse in the films. They do truly challenge the viewer's "will to

⁵³ Auerbach, "The Brown Stocking," *Mimesis*, 548–549.

interpretive synthesis.” And yet, this is actually probably true for most artworks. And perhaps this is what is so compelling about Warhol’s artworks overall, and why they have continued to interest audiences over time: they encourage us to accept what is actually true in all things: that the objects before us are always fragments, and in the case of artworks, the artist’s choices about how to present his work of art do not have to dictate or limit our understanding of that artwork; we make the meanings that we get based on our own preferences and limits to our knowledge or interest. Ultimately, as I always like to remember, we get the Warhol we deserve.⁵⁴

So in the end, this dissertation is in some ways a representation of the Warhol I deserve. And although I did not approach my subject in any systematic way, but rather allowed my instincts and the resources available to me over a number of years guide my thinking and writing about the films I discuss, I have chosen not to preserve the order of my own process in the ordering structure of this dissertation. Even if, as I argue, Warhol’s filmmaking career over time does not represent a logical technical or stylistic progression, nevertheless time did move in only one direction, and there is a benefit for the reader to understand each of the films and contexts I focus on according to a chronological trajectory. As I wrote each chapter, I always conceived of them in the order

⁵⁴ In his essay “Getting the Warhol We Deserve,” Crimp discusses the origin of the phrase that comprises his title, which was originally written by Hal Foster. Foster, in reference to his description of “two camps” of interpretations of Warhol—the “superficial, impassive,” and the “empathetic, even engagé”—as projections: “Both camps make the Warhol they need, or get the Warhol they deserve; no doubt we all do. And neither projection is wrong.” (Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* [Cambridge, MIT Press, 1999], 130.) Crimp’s response to this quotation pushes Foster’s statement one step further: “Indeed. But if this is the case, then surely it would be useful to explain why we think we need or deserve the particular Warhol we are making. This is what it would mean for criticism to be self-reflective, to recognize the double play of transference, to interrogate the subject as it interrogates the object.” (Crimp, “Getting the Warhol We Deserve,” 60.)

in which they appear, and as such there is also a logic to how my broader characterizations of Warhol's approach to filmmaking develop. One aspect of the text that may seem lacking to the reader is the dearth of film stills. Whenever possible, I have included images of other visual materials—sculpture, painting, printed matter, and photography—but my choice not to include film stills to supplement my discussions was a conscious decision, motivated initially by the lack of stills for some of the crucial scenes I discuss, especially in *Afternoon* and *Couch*. However, the final decision not to include stills was a result of the fact that I did not base my own descriptions of the films on looking at stills. I did eventually go to MoMA to screen the films that became the touchstones of my project, but as I have explained, my own process has involved reaching an understanding of how these films function not just as images on a screen, but as images that continue to function in the mind of the spectator after their screening is over. The result of this is that, inevitably, some of my descriptions are going to seem wildly inaccurate to people who have seen the films—as I believe some scholars' descriptions of the same films I discuss are. But this is a hazard of film scholarship: these films do not exist as plastic forms, and that is part of their inherent significance as historical objects. My withholding of images, to my mind, is not a withholding at all—to me they do very little, as do my own descriptions, to encapsulate the experience of watching.

Chapter One: Other Traditions

In his memoir *POPism: The Warhol Sixties*, Andy Warhol describes via Pat Hackett his first meeting with Henry Geldzahler, the then newly appointed curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Metropolitan Museum. It was late summer in 1960, and Geldzahler had accompanied Ivan Karp to Warhol's duplex apartment on Lexington Avenue, which Warhol had been using as his studio. Warhol, as many scholars have pointed out, was an avid collector of a wide and eclectic array of objects—so this studio visit doubled as an occasion for Geldzahler to survey Warhol's collecting habits:

When Henry and Ivan came in, I could see Henry doing an instant appraisal of every single thing in the room. He scanned all the things I collected--from the American folk pieces to the Carmen Miranda platform shoe (four inches long with a five inch heel) that I'd bought at an auction of her effects. Almost as quickly as a computer could put the information together, he said, "We have paintings by Florine Stettheimer in storage at the Met. If you want to come over there tomorrow, I'll show them to you." I was thrilled. Anyone who'd know just from glancing around that one room of mine that I loved Florine Stettheimer had to be brilliant. I could see that Henry was going to be a lot of fun...

Henry was a scholar who understood the past, but he also understood how to use the past to look at the future. Right away we became five-hours-a-day-on-the-phone-see-you-for-lunch-quick-turn-on-the-"Tonight-Show" friends.⁵⁵

Warhol goes on to explain how both he and Geldzahler were in similar positions with respect to New York's art world, since they were both new to it and aspired to rise through its ranks. The friendship that developed between them was a mutually beneficial one; in addition to being professional allies, each drew ideas from the other. Warhol says of Geldzahler, "He liked to compare our relationship to ones between the Renaissance

⁵⁵ Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1980), 15–16.

painters and the scholars of mythology or antiquity or Christian history who doled out the ideas for their subjects." Warhol recounts that Geldzahler told him, "I picked up a new attitude toward the media from you—not being selective, just letting everything in at once." Warhol also credits Geldzahler with giving him the idea for his *Death and Disaster* painting series.⁵⁶ These examples of creative exchange and shared worldview suggest that a particular brand of intellectual symbiosis—that which occurs between artist and scholar, two equals within a community, each with a particular role to play—fueled Warhol and Geldzahler's relationship.

Is it possible that Geldzahler also taught Warhol "how to use the past to look at the future"? Warhol's paintings and films from the 1960s seem to have little to do with the past; the subject matter of his silkscreens and in his films, culled from newspapers and tabloids, or the ideas or actions of whoever happened to be around the Factory during a filming, seems to reflect a relentless interest in the present, in the current moment. But Warhol was also interested in the work of Florine Stettheimer (1871–1944). Did he

⁵⁶ Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 15–17. Geldzahler corroborates that he gave Warhol the idea for the *Death and Disaster* series in an interview with John Wilcock: "I brought him the first newspaper that he did, the *129 Die in Jet*. This was in June '62. We met at Serendipity for lunch one day, and I brought him this headline and said, 'That's enough life; it's time for some death.'" (John Wilcock, *The Autobiography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol* [New York: Trela, 2010], 67.) Geldzahler was instrumental in reversing the tide of rejection initially placed on Warhol's entrée into the New York art world. Warhol worked tirelessly for months, doing studio visits with gallerists and curators who were brought to Warhol's apartment by his friends Emile de Antonio and Ivan Karp, two other friends of his who believed in Warhol's talent as a painter, not just as a commercial artist. Warhol had been having a hard time breaking into New York's fine art scene for a variety of reasons, including the stigma attached to his background in commercial art, and the resemblance of some of his paintings to Roy Lichtenstein's, who had already found representation with Leo Castelli and was becoming well known as a painter of comic strip imagery. Geldzahler's championing of Warhol's paintings forced skeptics to reconsider Warhol's work, since Geldzahler's opinion became highly regarded by New York's art elite in the early 1960s. See Gavin Butt, "The 'Inning' of Andy Warhol," in *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the Art World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 130; Henry Geldzahler interviewed in Patrick S. Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), 305–309.

simply admire her because she was a talented draughtsman and colorist, or was there something else in her work, beyond her technical skills and style, that stimulated him? American folk art, a Carmen Miranda shoe, Florine Stettheimer: is there any relationship at all between these things and Warhol's approach to his own work? These questions may be unanswerable to a certain extent, since I have found no material evidence relating Warhol's taste to the objects he collected or the artworks he admired and his own artwork.⁵⁷ However, I think that it might be a valuable exercise to imagine how both Warhol and Geldzahler might have used the cultural and artistic objects around them to construct a narrative about their own historical place in the world and their relationship to other people, living and dead. I believe they used things to instigate a dialogue, and those dialogues helped to shape their own identities with respect to one another, and, in turn, in relation to the world around them.

The day after their initial meeting, Warhol met Geldzahler at the Met to look at Stettheimer's series of paintings known as the Cathedrals: *The Cathedrals of Broadway* (1929), *The Cathedrals of Fifth Avenue* (1931), *The Cathedrals of Wall Street* (1939), and *The Cathedrals of Art* (1942). During her lifetime, one of Stettheimer's roles in the art

⁵⁷ I have actually noticed a connection between Warhol's films and Carmen Miranda: In Warhol's 1965 film *Harlot*, Ronald Tavel, whose voice is on the soundtrack but who does not appear on screen, says, "Actually, bananas remind me of Carmen Miranda." In at least two different Warhol films from that year, *Harlot* and *Afternoon*, actors sing the Chiquita banana jingle, which by the mid-1960s had become synonymous with Miranda, since the Chiquita banana logo had adopted the image of a woman in a fruit hat, which Miranda had worn in the 1943 film *The Gang's All Here*. I have always thought that a study of the presence and significance of bananas, which proliferate Warhol's films (including *Harlot*), as well as other artworks (most famously his cover for The Velvet Underground and Nico's debut LP) might yield an interesting essay—but for the purposes of this dissertation, the connection between Miranda and Warhol's films has not proven very fruitful for my argument. For more on *Harlot*, including a transcript of its soundtrack, see Ronald Tavel, "The Banana Diary (The Story of Andy Warhol's 'Harlot')," *Film Culture* 40 (Spring 1966): 43–66.

world was, as Parker Tyler describes it in his 1963 biography of her, an “art hostess.”⁵⁸ She and her sisters Carrie and Ettie were wealthy socialites, and they were all enthusiastic supporters of the arts in New York. Their apartment was a hub of activity, a salon for many avant-garde artists and literary figures during the two decades following the first World War. Perhaps Florine’s most famous friendship with another artist was with Marcel Duchamp, who appears in several of her paintings. She was actually close to a number of prominent artists, writers, and musicians during the first half of the twentieth century, and her peers roundly admired her paintings. However, Stettheimer rarely exhibited her work after a supposedly disastrous exhibition of her paintings at Knoedler Gallery in 1916. After this initial foray into the world of publicity, she preferred to show her paintings only in her studio or occasionally in group shows.⁵⁹ The only highly publicized project she undertook after her one person show was to design the costumes and sets in 1934 for *Four Saints in Three Acts*, the avant-garde opera composed by Virgil

⁵⁸ Parker Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer: Her Life in Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1963), 5.

⁵⁹ Tyler describes Florine’s *vernissage* at Knoedler Gallery as being ill-received by its audience: “Yet the present occasion, her ‘X,’ as Florine glibly termed it in her diary, had quite the opposite public reception from the phenomenal acclaim to be given *Four Saints [in Three Acts]* by the *cognoscenti*.” (Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, 27.) He later calls the Knoedler show a “palpable flop,” after describing Florine’s own disappointment, which she alluded to in her diary, that not a single painting in the show sold. (Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, 30.) Tyler also refers to the experience of the Knoedler show as “humiliating” to Florine, and speculates that even her sisters carried the memory of Florine’s disappointment years later. (Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, 62.) I have deliberately chosen to limit my explication of Stettheimer to Tyler’s biography of her, and a few books that were published by people who knew her or worked with her, in particular Henry McBride’s exhibition catalog of her posthumous painting retrospective, and Carl Van Vechten’s description of her involvement in *Four Saints in Three Acts*. My omission of more contemporary histories of Stettheimer’s life and work of course results in a limited reading of Stettheimer and her world, but part of my point about this time period of the early 1920s is that its history will always be somewhat incomplete. It is not my goal to create a comprehensive historical portrait of Stettheimer that utilizes exhaustive research, but to evoke an idea of her that might also translate into an idea of the persona that Warhol or Geldzahler might have had access to in 1963. See Henry McBride, *Florine Stettheimer* (New York: Simon and Schuster in association with the Museum of Modern Art, 1946) and Carl Van Vechten, “A Few Notes about Four Saints in Three Acts,” Introduction to *Four Saints in Three Acts: An Opera to Be Sung* by Gertrude Stein (New York: Random House, 1934), 5–10.

Thomson, with a libretto by Gertrude Stein.

Stettheimer's *Cathedrals*, which her sister Ettie donated to the Met after Florine's death in 1944, are some of her most compositionally complex paintings. In all of these paintings, Stettheimer includes famous personalities, many of whom she knew personally, so the paintings are partially autobiographical, and each depicts a particular phase of Florine's social life. Furthermore, the settings in each painting celebrate a particular aspect of city life that, for Stettheimer, epitomized the grandeur of New York. Tyler interprets the sequence in which Stettheimer painted the pictures—Broadway, Fifth Avenue, Wall Street, Art—as indicative of a particular trajectory for the city's social elite, of which Stettheimer was a part. Art, therefore, represents the epitome of this progression: "Theatre, Fashion, Money, Art—that was the social cycle of the *mondain* in New York, eminently urban, eminently recognizable, and also it [Art] was the last phase of a major artist, as yet herself unrecognized save by the fortunate few..."⁶⁰

Tyler's interpretation of Stettheimer's *Cathedrals* calls to mind Warhol's own transition from commercial to fine art—a period that lasted a few years, from the late 1950s and into 1962, the year of his famous Campbell's Soup Cans show at Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles.⁶¹ When Geldzahler and Warhol looked at the Stettheimer paintings in the

⁶⁰ Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, 68.

⁶¹ This was not Warhol's first gallery show. He had a show of "drawings based on the writings of Truman Capote" at Hugo Gallery in 1952. (James Fitzsimmons, "Irving Sherman, Andy Warhol," *Art Digest* 26 (July 1952): 19.) Warhol also had two exhibitions at Bodley Gallery in 1956. The first, in March, was called "Drawings for a Boy Book," and featured line drawings of young men. The second, in December, featured Warhol's "Crazy Golden Slippers," which were also reproduced in *Life* Magazine that same year. See Ronald Vance, review of "Drawings for a Boy Book," *ARTNews* 55 (March 1956): 55; Parker Tyler, review of Bodley Gallery show, *ARTNews* 55 (December 1956): 59; "Crazy Golden Slippers," *Life*, January 21, 1957. For queer interpretations of Warhol's early drawings, see Trevor Fairbrother,

Met storage area that summer day in 1960, Warhol was still struggling to gain recognition from the galleries that had the power to ensure his ascendance into the elite realm of fine art. There is no record of what Geldzahler and Warhol said or thought about the Stettheimer paintings, or what they talked about, but *The Cathedrals of Art* [figure 2], which remained unfinished at the time of Stettheimer's death, was probably particularly attractive to Geldzahler because the entire painting, as its title suggests, is a paean to New York's museums—particularly those with modernist interests. Perhaps as an allusion to the classical, idealized representation of intellectual and artistic virtuosity, Stettheimer's composition replicates aspects of Raphael's *School of Athens*, with its large archway in the middle ground. A receding staircase between its two massive pillars serves as a transitional space between the foreground and background. Across the arch and the horizontal lintel connecting the two pillars, Stettheimer painted the words "Metropolitan / Museum 1941." She has also labeled each of the pillars: one contains the words "Art in America" and the other "American Art." On the left side of the composition, Stettheimer depicted a small, recessed room that looks like a department store window. The words "Museum" and "Modern Art" frame the top and bottom of the tableau in this room, in which Alfred H. Barr, Jr., MoMA's director (until 1943), sits in a chair surrounded by Picasso paintings. On the opposite side of the composition is a similar scene: a room containing a large abstract sculpture under a banner that says "Whitney."

"'Tomorrow's Man,'" in *"Success Is a Job in New York" The Early Art and Business of Andy Warhol* (New York: The Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, 1989) and Richard Meyer, "Most Wanted Men: Homoeroticism and the Secret Censorship in Early Warhol," in *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 95–128.

Other prominent works from art history decorate the space of the painting, notably a large portrait by Franz Hals in the center of the back wall, illuminated by the strong light of a chandelier that hangs above the entire scene. Stettheimer has placed her contemporaries prominently in the foreground—people with whom she socialized and whom she has immortalized as the inheritors and progenitors of a distinctly American artistic tradition. In the extreme foreground of the painting, a baby, the personification of the still infantile state of American art, lies supine on the floor, as flashes from the cameras of Alfred Stieglitz and George Platt Lynes create a sort of glowing mandorla around it.⁶² The curator and critic Henry McBride appears directly in front of the left pillar, holding two flags that read “Stop” and “Go,” which Tyler interprets as symbols of the authority of “enlightened critical opinion.”⁶³

Stettheimer herself appears in a prominent position within the painting: in the extreme right foreground she stands weightlessly under a white lace and gold-fringed canopy. Under her feet a banner reads “Commère,” or “Godmother” (Her friend, scenic designer and decorator Robert Locher, stands on the left side of the canvas as “Compère.”⁶⁴) The white canopy itself, as Tyler explains, appears again and again in

⁶² Henry McBride’s catalogue for the exhibition *Florine Stettheimer* contains detailed captions for several of the paintings. McBride identifies several of the figures included in the *Cathedrals* paintings, as well as in other group scenes such as *La Fête à Duchamp* (1917), *Sunday Afternoon in the Country* (1917), and *Asbury Park South* (1920). The caption for *The Cathedrals of Art* appears on page 53.

⁶³ Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, 74.

⁶⁴ My research has turned up very little about Locher. Grove Art Online identifies Locher (1888–1956) as “an Art Deco interior designer and stage designer” from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who became involved in a long-term romantic relationship with Charles Demuth around 1909. (*Grove Art Online*, s.v. “Demuth, Charles,” by Betsy Fahlman, accessed 5 March 2012, http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/subscriber/article/grove/art/T022127?q=locher%2C+robert&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.) Carl Van Vechten mentions Locher three times in passing in his collected letters, once in a letter to Edna Kenton dated 6 November 1925: “The other news

Florine's works and décor, and for years a white canopy also adorned her own bedroom. The canopy also recalls, as does the title "Commère," the sets and costumes that Florine designed for *Four Saints in Three Acts*, in which a Compère and Commère watch over and comment on the actions of the saints in the opera. Stetteheimer, it seems, saw herself as a sort of protector and matron of the world she depicts in her painting.

How much of this iconography and history were Geldzahler and Warhol aware of when looking at Stetteheimer's painting that day in the Met? Figures who appear in *The Cathedrals of Art* such as Barr, A. Everett "Chick" Austin, Julien Levy and McBride—all prominent curators or museum directors—were Geldzahler's own immediate ancestors in terms of his position as a then new curator at a major New York museum. The allegorical message of the painting should have been clear to Geldzahler: the future of American art, itself rooted in western European antecedents, lies in the hands of a distinct and distinguished few. Since they were looking at the paintings off the wall, they had the chance to see Stetteheimer's original title for *The Cathedrals of Art*, "Our Dawn of Art," which she wrote on the back of the painting's wooden stretcher.⁶⁵ Did they delight in Stetteheimer's audacity to paint another infant dancing on top of a Mondrian in front of Barr in his museum? Did they interpret Pavel Tchelitchew's upraised hands (he stands behind the left pillar, directly behind Chick Austin who leans against the front of the pillar) as "at once expostulatory and damning," as Tyler would in his book on

which I hope you have not heard yet is Bobby Locher's marriage to Beatrice Howard...I asked Louise [Norton] if it was a surprise. 'Bobby was surprised, I think,' she said." (Carl Van Vechten, *Letters of Carl Van Vechten*, ed. Bruce Kellner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 20.)

⁶⁵ Tyler, *Florine Stetteheimer*, 74.

Stettheimer?⁶⁶ Did they dish about Monroe Wheeler and George Platt Lynes, or about who else might have been sleeping with whom? Commère, incidentally, can also be translated from the French into “gossip.” In addition to Stettheimer’s painting being an homage to modern American art, it also functions as a map of the social networks of a particular community. For incessant phone talkers such as Geldzahler and Warhol, going over the private particulars of the personal lives of these prominent figures in an art world of the not-so-distant past should have been irresistible, if they knew even some of the subjects in the painting.

But what if they recognized only a fraction of the subjects I have named above? What if Geldzahler and Warhol looked upon Stettheimer’s *Cathedrals*, and instead of drawing a direct line of descent from the New York society depicted in them to their own art communities in 1960, they became starkly aware, through their failure to recognize many of the people and places represented in her paintings, of their own status as outsiders looking in to a world that no longer existed—and that never existed for them? Stettheimer did not make these paintings with the intention of exhibiting them; they were pictures of her world, people she knew, people she wanted to know, or portraits of an age—a particular moment or period of time. They are a little like Warhol’s own films: they function for the artist as a way of coming to know a subject, representing relationships among people, sometimes establishing bonds and capturing a moment in time through a visual medium. Perhaps when making his films, Warhol did not always

⁶⁶ Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, 75. Warhol also collected Tchelitchev’s artwork. In John Wilcock’s interview with Geldzahler for *The Autobiography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol*, Geldzahler says, “Andy’s always been a collector, sort of a secret collector. His closet is full of Tchelitchev [sic], Frank Stella and John Chamberlain and all kinds of things.” (Wilcock, *Autobiography and Sex Life*, 66.)

consider their legibility for the audience who might ultimately watch them. Perhaps the films were not for those outside viewers.⁶⁷ And yet, as I suggest with my speculative scenario of how Warhol and Geldzahler might have experienced the *Cathedrals*, the artworks are still charged and open to interpretations, as well as to the recognition by certain spectators of some of the many public figures who appear in them, and hence to the establishment of new bonds or the creation of new narratives, both between spectators and between the spectator and the subjects pictured in the frame. Like my own early experiences with photographs of Warhol's Factory and with his films that capture a community of insiders, this chapter is an exploration of how outsiders—spectators of art and films, some of whom lived during the period that such works were made and some of whom may not see the works until years later—may relate to representations of a world that no longer exists in the present.

* * *

There is, as many scholars have pointed out, an obsessive quality to Warhol's filmmaking practice: the fixation on one subject (a man sleeping, the Empire State building) in roll after roll of film, or the films that constitute variations on a single theme (*Kiss*, *Eat*, the hundreds of *Screen Tests*). As Jonathan Flatley has observed, Warhol's approach to making art is, in some ways, akin to his passion for collecting, and his penchant for collecting a vast array of objects from several different eras and regions

⁶⁷ As Crimp says of the face hidden in shadow during much of *Blow Job*, "We cannot make eye contact. We cannot look into this man's eyes and detect the vulnerability that his submission to being pleased entails. We cannot take sexual possession of him. We can see his face, but we cannot, as it were, *have* it. This face is not *for* us." (Douglas Crimp, "Face Value," in "*Our Kind of Movie*" *The Films of Andy Warhol* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013], 7.)

existed alongside his production of paintings and films. The extent of Warhol's collecting practices was not widely or publicly known until Sotheby's began auctioning off his effects after his death in 1987, and until recently scholars regarded the collecting as a separate activity, one Warhol kept private and which presumably did not affect his artistic practice. Although perhaps not obvious in his early Pop art, these two aspects of Warhol--his cool style (which also manifested in his own self-presentation) and his avid penchant for objects with styles that were more visually opulent or out of fashion--did inform one another. Flatley, in his essay "Liking Things," argues that the images Warhol chose for his Pop paintings, often culled from press photos of movie stars and car crashes, or FBI pamphlets of wanted criminals, were carefully selected by Warhol, just as a collector chooses a new object for his collection:

Despite Warhol's protestations to the contrary, the photos he appropriated were very much chosen, or more exactly, collected. That is, the condition of possibility for Warhol's appropriation art was an energetic collecting practice. However, this does not mean that one should view Warhol's collections as "source material" for his paintings. They are rather, in a very real sense, the model for Warhol's art. When Warhol suggests, in the 1963 interview with G. Swenson, that Pop Art is "liking things," he implies that the structure of feeling that "is" Pop might be expanded far beyond the boundaries of painting.⁶⁸

Furthermore, each addition to a collection creates new meanings, both for the latest acquisition and for the pieces already in that collection. These new meanings emerge from the relationships established among the items within the collection, which group

⁶⁸ Jonathan Flatley, "Liking Things," in *Possession Obsession: Andy Warhol and Collecting* (Pittsburgh: The Andy Warhol Museum, 2002), 99. Flatley cites Walter Benjamin's remarks on The Collector in *The Arcades Project* here to elaborate what he means by appropriation, specifically "the fact that the true collector detaches the object from its original functional relations." (Flatley, "Liking Things," 99, quoting Walter Benjamin, "The Collector," in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999], 207.)

similar objects with one another, according to themes based on media, subject matter, or provenance.⁶⁹ As the above quotation suggests, Flatley is particularly interested in how Warhol's practice of liking extends to his collecting practices and how those activities qualify as part of Warhol's larger approach to the world around him—of which his Pop paintings are but one part in a much broader and affective Pop worldview.⁷⁰ This worldview was hardly an isolating one; his friendship with Geldzahler attests that Warhol's unadulterated interest in objects, images, and ideas extended to his friends' interests and ideas as well. Analogous to this is another statement by Flatley: "intimacy and friendship for Warhol were often based on a shared interest in collecting."⁷¹ Taking Flatley's statements in tandem, it is possible to infer that there is a connection among Warhol's collecting practices, his relationships with his friends, and the production of his artworks. Warhol's most productive and profound friendships were those that involved a shared affection for the acquisition of things, and this same tendency for "liking things"

⁶⁹ Benjamin states, later in the same passage quoted by Flatley in n. 68 above, "It must be kept in mind that, for the collector, the world is present, and indeed ordered, in each of his objects. Ordered, however, according to a surprising and, for the profane understanding, incomprehensible connection... We need only recall what importance a particular collector attaches not only to his object but also to its entire past, whether this concerns the origin and objective characteristics of the thing or the details of its ostensibly external history: previous owners, price of purchase, current value, and so on. All of these—the 'objective' data together with the other—come together, for the true collector, in every single one of his possessions, to form a whole magic encyclopedia, a world order, whose outline is the *fate* of his object." (Benjamin, "The Collector," 207.)

⁷⁰ In a later essay, Flatley focuses particularly on how Warhol's collecting facilitated his capacity for recognizing similarities among objects—sameness, or alikeness—and thus his capacity for establishing and sustaining a heightened affective attachment to many things which others might have found uninteresting or boring. In this respect, Flatley's arguments actually dovetail with some of my own conclusions later in this chapter, in particular my discussion below of Gene Swenson's evocation of "'hot' conscious involvement" with respect to viewing works of art. (Jonathan Flatley, "Like: Collecting and Collectivity," *October* 132 [Spring 2010]: 71–98.)

⁷¹ Flatley, "Liking Things," 97. Flatley is referring here specifically to a later period in Warhol's life, after the Factory had moved to its Union Square location (1968) and around the time he hired Fred Hughes, who was also an avid collector. In addition to frequenting shops and dealers together in New York, Hughes and Warhol used to travel together for the express purpose of collecting all manner of objects.

also informed his artwork, including especially, I would argue, his films. Flatley says as much when he states, “Warhol’s early films, including *Empire*, *Eat*, the *Screen Tests*, *Blow Job*, and others, demonstrate Warhol’s talent for liking things more than some of his other work (in which things that many people already liked—like Marilyn or Jackie or Elvis or Mao or Campbell’s soup—were the topic) because here his ability to like so clearly exceeds everyone else’s.”⁷²

Warhol did indeed seem to like mundane subjects, as his minimal films and his paintings of Campbell’s soup cans suggest. But often, his films’ titles belie the action that takes place in them, much of which is far from mundane. Perhaps the most blatant example of this is the 1964 film *Couch*, which consists of thirteen 100-foot rolls of 16mm, black-and-white silent film. When spliced together and projected at silent film speed, the result is a film that is approximately 52 minutes long.⁷³ Although the lighting

⁷² Flatley, “Liking Things,” 95. Flatley elaborates on this idea in “Like: Collecting and Collectivity,” with an extended discussion of how Warhol’s early cock drawings, his sound recordings at the Factory, and his Screen Tests constitute highly affective collections for Warhol.

⁷³ Warhol’s silent films all utilized what is known as silent speed projection—although filmed at 24 frames per second, they were projected at 16 frames per second. The recommended speed for their projection by MoMA and the Andy Warhol Film Project is now 18 fps, based on the conditions of most of today’s film projectors. (The Museum of Modern Art Circulating Film Library, *The Films of Andy Warhol* [undated catalog of films for rent], 14.) My description of *Couch* is based on multiple viewings at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh in Fall 2008 (on VHS transfer of MoMA’s 16mm version), and one viewing at MoMA in July 2012 (16mm projection). Other sources cite other versions of the film. Reva Wolf based her own description of *Couch* on Gerard Malanga’s copy of the film, which is also thirteen short reels. Although Wolf focuses on different details in her analysis, Malanga’s version seems to correspond to the MoMA version. (Reva Wolf, *Andy Warhol, Poetry, and Gossip in the 1960s*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 48, 115, 134.) The description of *Couch* that most differs from my own experience of the film occurs in Patrick S. Smith’s 1978 interview with Ronald Tavel, in which Tavel says *Couch* consists of 24 hours’ worth of 35-minute reels, almost all with pornographic content. Tavel describes a screening of this version of *Couch* in which people arrived at the Factory, watched the film for a while and then left, while Warhol sat rapt and engaged with the screen for the duration of the film. (Patrick S. Smith, *Andy Warhol’s Art and Films* [Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986], pp. 488–489.) The disparity between Tavel’s description and mine and others’ is a mystery—but I tend to believe that the MoMA and Malanga versions of *Couch* are probably the same, and that the same version was rented out to venues and individuals, which I discuss later. Other descriptions of *Couch* occur in Lucas Hilderbrand “Sex

often varies dramatically from reel to reel, in every sequence the camera remains stationary, and the same second-hand, rather Deco couch appears roughly in the center of the frame. This same couch, one of two in Warhol's Factory, appears in several other films from this period, including *Kiss* and *Henry Geldzahler*. Each reel of *Couch* displays a different configuration of people engaging in various activities, and the couch is also often in different locations in the Factory space. In the first reel, Gerard Malanga lies across the back of the couch, watching intently a sleeping Piero Heliczer; the couch sits in front of a flat wall, and on that wall hangs one of Warhol's large *Flowers* paintings. In the next reel, the couch has been positioned on screen left and slightly sideways so that it recedes diagonally into the background and faces screen right. A motorcycle, its large headlamp facing the camera, takes up most of the right side of the screen. For the length of this reel, Naomi Levine reclines naked on the couch, continuously posing like a pin-up girl, moving her shoulders to draw attention to her voluptuous breasts, raising her left hand over and behind her head, and smiling broadly into a space somewhere behind the camera. (I have no idea if I am misremembering, but when I envision this scene, a wind from what I imagine to be a strong fan off-screen blows Naomi's hair back from her face, accentuating the clichéd, pinup quality of her pose.) Throughout this reel, a man in aviator sunglasses busies himself by tinkering with the motorcycle, indifferent to Naomi's actions. At one point, a slight movement in the upper region of the frame sparks a realization that, unlike the first reel, the space of this scene is deep: a small figure, in

out of Sync: *Christmas on Earth's* and *Couch's* Queer Soundtracks" (*Camera Obscura*, forthcoming 2013), an early draft of which I read at the Queer Underground Cinema symposium at Yale University in 2009 (all subsequent citations refer to the 2009 conference paper); and J. J. Murphy, *The Black Hole of the Camera: The Films of Andy Warhol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

shirtsleeves and tie, stands in what looks like a cluttered office space or storage area deep in the background of the composition. He or she moves around some objects or perhaps picks something up, then walks out of the frame after only a few seconds.

Subsequent reels of *Couch* exhibit various other spatial configurations, and the angle of the couch in relation to the lens of the camera also varies. In the third reel, the couch stands sideways on screen left so only one arm of it is visible in the foreground. Gregory Corso, on the side closest to the camera, sits on the couch in profile and flips through a magazine while drinking a beer as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, and two other men sit and talk to one another. Ginsberg is the most animated of the group, at various times standing up from the couch, leaving the frame, returning to sit on the floor, and placing stickers (which appear to be Chiquita banana stickers) on the side of the couch facing the camera.⁷⁴ This is the only reel of the film that features these players and this particular composition of the couch within the frame. When the location of the couch and its orientation within the frame do repeat from reel to reel, many cast members also reappear, so that even when the reels are not shown consecutively, a sense of continuity, even multiple continuities, develop throughout the course of the film. In reels four and seven we see Malanga, another blonde man, and John Palmer eat bananas, while Ivy Nicholson lies upside down, her legs thrown over the back of the couch, her head hanging from the seat and facing the camera. In the sixth reel, Baby Jane Holzer,

⁷⁴ Reva Wolf discusses this reel as illustrative of Warhol's connection to beat culture, particularly the avant-garde poetry scene. (Wolf, *Andy Warhol, Poetry, and Gossip* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 130–136.) J. J. Murphy takes a similar tack in his book on Warhol's films when he describes this reel, as Wolf also does, as a sort of tribute to Robert Frank and Al Leslie's film *Pull My Daisy*, which also features Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Corso. (Murphy, *The Black Hole of the Camera*, 43.)

two other women (one of them Amy Taubin), and Malanga, dressed in a pinstripe suit and lying across the back of the couch, also eat bananas. In all of these banana-eating scenes, the camera sits slightly above the figures, and frames the couch tightly so that the tops of the figures' heads (or legs, in Ivy's case) almost meet the top edge of the composition. Reel five shows Malanga constantly combing his hair as Billy Name and Levine sit next to him on the couch, talking to each other. This is the same setting as reel two, with the diagonal couch and the motorcycle; the same man in sunglasses kneels next to the motorcycle, still tinkering with it. In this reel, as Name and Levine talk, a random figure runs across the screen very quickly. Several seconds later, another figure (or perhaps the same one) runs in front of the camera again, then around the couch, into the deep space of the room, and then out of the frame. The quick pace of this figure, in contrast with the languid movements of the figures on the couch, which are slowed even more due to the film's silent speed projection, lends a random, comic element to the scene. This sense of playfulness gets underscored during the final seconds of the reel when, from screen right, a large, plastic monster arm creeps into the frame, followed by the actual shirt-sleeved arm that holds the prop, and then by the grinning face of a man, the holder of the prop.

The eighth reel includes *Couch's* first sexual encounter. The camera has framed the couch in a medium shot, so plenty of the floor in front of the couch, as well as some of the shadowy space behind it, is visible. The wooden slats and rounded back of a swiveling desk chair occupy the space in the immediate foreground on screen left. Two men lie on the couch, naked and kissing, while two other men, one shirtless in black jeans

and the other wearing a button-down shirt and pants, briefly stand in front of the couch, until the man in the shirt sits down on the floor and talks either to the men on the couch or to the man in black jeans who is now out of frame.⁷⁵ The embracing men's heads lean toward the left side of the frame. The lighting is strong but coming from the right, so the men's faces are in shadow. As they continue to kiss, the seated man holds a triangular mirror fragment, then drops it, and it breaks on the floor. A few seconds later, yet another man walks past the camera in front of the couch, wielding a rolling vacuum cleaner with a long tube. He halfheartedly vacuums over the area where the mirror broke, pausing to move the nozzle comically over the naked bodies on the couch. Soon after he wheels the vacuum away, a man with a suitcase also walks past the camera. The man on the floor, who still holds a small piece of mirror, puts on a pair of sunglasses, and people continue to walk in front of the couch, passing in and out of the frame. The couple continues to embrace, and they lie across the couch, holding each other until the reel ends.

This eighth reel is actually the beginning of a sort of film within a film because reels nine, ten, and eleven all possess the same basic scenario as reel eight—the couch in the same position, the camera in the same position, and essentially the same cast of players. Although the two naked men, whom we eventually recognize as Ondine and Malanga, remain the sexual focal point (indeed, if one were to focus solely on these two men, the reels would become an out-of-sequence narrative about the hardness of

⁷⁵ J. J. Murphy identifies this man as Walter Dainwood. (Murphy, *The Black Hole of the Camera*, 43). Dainwood sat for two *Screen Tests*, both also in 1964. Callie Angell identifies Dainwood as “one of the crowd known as the ‘opera people,’ a group who would gather at the Factory to listen to records and to Ondine’s lectures on the operatic arts.” Angell also explains that Dainwood was a friend of Marie Mencken and Willar Maas, and that he wrote an essay about Maas in a 1967 issue of *Filmwise*. (Callie Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, 57 and 301 n. 68.)

Malanga's cock), the action that occurs around these mostly stationary figures is chaotic and animated, and sometimes has little to do with them. In many instances, the man who had been holding the mirror in reel eight simply upstages the naked couple. In the ninth reel, it takes only moments to recognize that this man is likely strung out on speed: he gestures his arms wildly as he takes deep, hungry drags on his cigarette; he stands up, sits down, and stands up again restlessly, all the while talking non-stop and removing his sunglasses repeatedly to reveal darting eyes. Eventually he begins pacing toward and away from the camera; reel nine ends as he stares wide-eyed into its lens. During all of this, in addition to Malanga and Ondine positioning themselves as if they are about to fuck but never consummating, at one point the man in black jeans walks in with a hollow wooden cube and does a handstand on it, while smoking a cigarette. In the eleventh reel, this same man walks in and out of the frame, sometimes pausing behind the couch to watch Ondine and Malanga, and once leaning over to kiss them both. All four of these reels—eight through eleven—seem to have been shot in rapid succession, although they were subsequently spliced together out of sequence. We see the strung out man, as well as Malanga and Ondine, in various stages of undress; objects such as a bag of chips, a large roll of cellophane, and the wooden desk chair disappear and sometimes reappear; another couple dances together across the screen; yet another pair of figures chats with Malanga and Ondine, as Ondine continues to fondle Malanga's penis.

In reel twelve, the setting changes dramatically. The camera frames a medium close-up of the couch, which faces the camera and rests directly in front of a wall, two thirds of which is covered with the Factory's characteristic aluminum foil. The rest of the

wall is blank white. Only three figures are present in the shot, and they are all naked: Gerard Malanga is on the screen left side of the couch, on his knees facing screen right, so he is in full profile. Directly in front of / next to him is Kate Heliczner; her back is turned toward him as she lies on top of Rufus Collins, who is on his back with his head on the armrest of the screen right side of the couch. The lighting in this reel spreads evenly across the front of the couch so that all the figures are well lit, and all of the action is clearly visible. Kate and Rufus kiss and fondle one another as Malanga kneels over and licks her ass and genitals. He then appears to begin to fuck her from behind (no blatant penetration is visible at any point). Unlike the other reels, no other figures or objects enter the frame for the duration of the reel.⁷⁶

The spatial orientation of the couch and the figures in the film's thirteenth and final reel is similar to reels eight through eleven, with one crucial difference: a young blonde woman now sits in the extreme screen-left foreground, presumably in the same desk chair that occupied two earlier reels. Her body effectively blocks a portion of the couch, taking up about half of the left side of the screen. On the half of the couch that the camera does manage to capture, Ondine is clearly visible, although the face of the other man, in white jeans lying across the couch, is totally hidden by the woman. What we do see taking place, however, is clearly a blow job. The unidentified man's penis is in full view of the camera, as is the act of fellatio. At one point Ondine moves from the couch to the floor, and repositions the man so his body is facing the camera, then continues

⁷⁶ In either late 2008 or early 2009, Angell relayed to me an anecdote about this scene—that Piero, who was present during the filming, became enraged as he watched his wife having sex with Malanga.

blowing him, although due to this repositioning, Ondine's bobbing head blocks the penis from view. During this entire reel, the woman sits, mostly still, calmly smoking a cigarette while facing the camera and gazing into the space behind it.

The sexual content of *Couch* is arguably the most blatant and graphic of any of Warhol's films. (It is the only film in MoMA's rental catalog for Warhol's films that, after its short summary, contains the disclaimer, in bold italic type, "Intended for mature audiences only."⁷⁷) Perhaps due to its sexual content, the film does not seem to have been distributed very widely. The underground magazine *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, which features a reverse still of the film featuring Malanga, Kate Heliczer, and Collins on its February 1965 cover, identifies *Couch* as a "banned" film, although the reasons for this designation remain unclear [figures 3 and 4].⁷⁸ It is possible that none of the local underground movie venues would screen the film. Indeed, authorities likely would have seized it if it had shown publicly in 1964—the year that Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*, Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks*, and Jean Genet's *Un chant d'amour* met that fate.⁷⁹ Lucas Hilderbrand has noticed that the film was listed in a 1966 advertisement for Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, where it likely would have been projected along with a

⁷⁷ MoMA Circulating Film Library, *The Films of Andy Warhol*, 4.

⁷⁸ *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts* 8, no. 5 (February 1965): 3. The title of the column where this citation appears is entitled "Talk of the Town" (a spoof of the *New Yorker* column of the same name) and lists the cover credit as "by ANDY WARHOL from his banned COUCH MOVIE. It was kindly Thermofaxed & glued by William Linich. The superstars are, left to right, Rufus Collins, Kate Heliczer & the fellow leaning down to muff Kate is, of course, Gerard Malanga" [sic]. Reva Wolf discusses this cover image's relationship to a list of Malanga's friends and purported lovers—one column for men and another for women—that appears inside the issue, and both items' function within a discourse of gossip. The page with the list is titled "Friends of Gerard Malanga (commissioned by Ronnie Tavel)." (Wolf, *Andy Warhol, Poetry, and Gossip*, 48–49).

⁷⁹ For a concise description of the seizure of these three films and the legal battles that subsequently ensued, see J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Midnight Movies* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1991), 59–61.

number of other films as background for that multimedia event.⁸⁰ In his book *Stargazer*, Stephen Koch claims that the film was never intended for release, but a balance sheet recording the rental of Warhol's films from 1963–1967 indicates that *Couch* was rented out four times.⁸¹ In March 1965, the journalist Rosalind Constable, who was then a regular contributor to *Time* and *Life*, rented it along with *Kiss* and *Harlot*, but Constable seems not to have published any writing on Warhol's films.⁸² No more transactions for *Couch* appear on the balance sheet until 1967, when the record shows three more rentals. One was to Parker Tyler, who rented a number of Warhol films, and although Tyler discussed Warhol's cinema in several articles and books in the 1960s, no discussion of *Couch* appears in any of his writings on Warhol or on underground film in general. The other two renters of *Couch* in 1967 were film exhibition proprietors on the West coast: one was the Presidio Theater in San Francisco, and the other, listed only as "Getz," was probably Mike Getz, who ran the Cinema Theatre in Los Angeles.⁸³ The Presidio was mostly known as a venue for pornographic films, but it had also rented Warhol films as

⁸⁰ Hilderbrand, "Sex Out of Sync," 19.

⁸¹ Untitled balance sheet of rentals of Warhol's films by the Filmmakers Cinematheque, Time Capsule 39, Andy Warhol Museum and Archives.

⁸² Constable sat for a Warhol *Screen Test* in 1964. Angell's biographical profile in her catalogue raisonné of the *Screen Tests* conveys Constable's role as "cultural trend-spotter" in New York's literary and art worlds (Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, 57). In a 1965 article for *The Village Voice*, David Bourdon, recounting the hysteria that ensued at the opening for Warhol's retrospective at the ICA in Philadelphia, noted, "Nearly trampled in the melee was the entire pop art brain trust—Rosalind Constable, Henry Geldzahler, and G. R. Swenson, all of them old hands at non-violent museum openings." (David Bourdon, "Andy Warhol Causes a Near Riot in Philly!" *The Village Voice* Vol. X, no. 52 [14 October 1965], reprinted at http://blogs.villagevoice.com/runninscared/2009/10/clip_job_warhol.php, accessed 21 January 2013).

⁸³ Untitled balance sheet, Time Capsule 39, Andy Warhol Museum and Archives. Earlier entries on the balance sheet indicate that the renter named simply "Presidio" was in fact the Presidio in San Francisco; "Presidio, San Francisco" appears as early as 1966. Tyler rented *Couch* along with *Vinyl*, *Harlot*, and a film labeled "JC," which likely refers to *The Life of Juanita Castro*. I have found no writing by Tyler on *Couch*, although the film does appear in Warhol's filmography at the back of Tyler's book *Underground Film* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969).

early as 1966. Getz, a well known underground film exhibitor and programmer, also distributed films across the country to various movie houses.⁸⁴ In spite of these apparently public screenings in the late 1960s, I have been unable to find any contemporary reviews of *Couch*. It is possible that the proprietors of the screenings, even by 1967, did not wish to draw attention to *Couch* by advertising it.

The fact remains, however, that *Couch* is an important film in Warhol's catalog, in spite of its seeming lack of viewership during the 1960s. Although the film appears infrequently in extended discussions of Warhol's cinema, when it does, scholars usually focus on *Couch*'s sexual content as a means of contextualizing it within Warhol's oeuvre. Obviously, Warhol's films from the 1960s often involve sex, and a scan of his filmography yields numerous titles that contain sexual content: *Kiss* (1964) is blatantly sexual; *Blow Job* (1964) is not as visually explicit as its title suggests, but its reference to sex is clear in its title and in its content. *Mario Banana No. 1* and *No. 2* (1964) and *Eating Too Fast* (1966) are just a few examples of Warhol's penchant for witty double entendre with regard to representing sexual acts—and as Douglas Crimp has pointed out, *Eating Too Fast* includes the fellatio that was cropped from the frame in *Blow Job*. Still other films explore aspects of sex such as sadomasochism (*Vinyl* and *Horse* [both 1965]), prostitution (*My Hustler* [1965]), and rape (*Lonesome Cowboys* [1968]). The list goes on. By the time *Blue Movie* (originally entitled *Fuck* and filmed in 1968) became known as the first Warhol film actually to show genital intercourse in full view of the camera,

⁸⁴ For more on Warhol's own involvement with both the Presidio Theater in San Francisco and the Presidio Theater in Los Angeles, see "Late Aug. 1967," warholstars.org, accessed 21 January 2013, <http://www.warholstars.org/chron/1967.html>. For more on Mike Getz and his long history as a promoter and manager of underground film venues, see Hoberman and Rosenbaum, *Midnight Movies*, 60 and 73.

Warhol had been including sexual content in his films for years. And as Jennifer Doyle has rightly observed, most of the action during *Blue Movie*'s 133 minutes has little if anything to do with sex.⁸⁵

Certain of the later reels of *Couch* are decidedly sexual, and even downright erotic. Furthermore, their particular brand of eroticism does not make the sort of intellectual demands on the spectator that some of his other films do—nor does it offer its eroticism up to just anybody. For example, although some critics have confessed to sexual arousal when watching *Blow Job*, and I myself would not disagree that it is sexually stimulating, it is also clear that the film is a tease; we imagine the blow job and make efforts to visualize what we do not see, and therefore we are free to see anything we like. The sexual content of the film therefore lies in part inside our own minds, and not on the screen. Likewise, in *Blue Movie*, as both Doyle and Callie Angell have observed, the film does not function as pornography so much as a revelation of the mechanics of how a pornographic film functions. Doyle comments on how such a revelation might affect the audience's experience of watching the film: "As the mechanics of filming sex is made visible to us, as we bear witness to the ongoing negotiations between the person behind the camera and the people in front of it, and between those people on the screen, we are

⁸⁵ I first heard Doyle make this particular observation about *Blue Movie* during a talk at the Harvard University symposium "Andy: 80?" on the occasion of Warhol's 80th birthday, in Fall 2008. The talk, entitled "Between Friends," was a shortened version of Doyle's essay of the same name, published in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*, ed. George Haggerty and Molly McGarry. (Chicester: Wiley, 2008), 325–340, accessed 4 March 2013, <http://utxa.ebilib.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=350877>. In that essay, Doyle states, "Only a small fraction of the film is centered on sex—the overwhelming majority of the screen time is taken up by aimless banter, story-swapping, and a fairly lengthy discussion of politics and the war in Vietnam." (Doyle, "Between Friends," 333.)

invited into the film's visual and erotic scenario."⁸⁶ The interactions in *Blue Movie* between Viva and Warhol, who is behind the camera, underscore for the spectator the fact that the sex taking place on the screen is being orchestrated through a collaborative effort that sometimes has more to do with the relationship of the filmmaker to his stars than to a relationship between or among the stars themselves and which does not involve simply, in the case of *Blue Movie*, a more conventional scenario of pornography, in which two people become aroused, with seemingly no acknowledgement of the camera or the onlookers behind it, and decide to fuck.⁸⁷

In contrast to both *Blow Job* and *Blue Movie*, the erotic payoff in the final two reels of *Couch* is obvious; they qualify as pornographic, in part, because the images within the frame and on the screen provide a visible point of access to images of sexual arousal for the spectator—at least to those spectators who are turned on by the particular sexual configuration represented on the screen. In fact, these reels provide substantive content rather than just a suggestion for the viewer to create his or her own sexual scenario or to acknowledge the mechanics of the filmmaking, and in that sense the reels of *Couch* have the capacity to limit the imagination to a certain extent. *Couch*'s twelfth reel is, in fact, unequivocally confrontational; there is no distance between the subject

⁸⁶ Doyle, "Between Friends," 335. Doyle quotes Angell's statement about *Blue Movie* being a "deconstruction of pornography" on page 333. (Callie Angell, *The Films of Andy Warhol: Part II* [New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994], 36.)

⁸⁷ Doyle's analysis elaborates on how Viva and Warhol's relationship, more than her and her co-star Louis Waldron's, is the compelling relationship of the film, which, through an understanding by the spectator that the camera is actually a stand-in for Warhol himself, results in "'a sort of coalition' between audience, filmmaker and subject around a shared erotic identification." Thus Viva, by her own conspiratorial attitude with Warhol that she performs onscreen through a number of witty or comical gestures, allows "the film's audience to imagine ourselves as a part of the architecture of this scene, to imagine everyone on the screen as 'in' on both her joke and her pleasure." (Doyle, "Between Friends," 336.)

and the viewer, no distraction like a vacuum cleaner, a smoking woman, uneven lighting, or cropping of the frame to detract from the visual focus of the action.

Because the representation of sex in the twelfth reel of *Couch* is so stark and visible—it is after all the most visually lucid of the film’s thirteen reels—perhaps it is easy to assume that sexual arousal is the film’s ultimate function. Indeed, the particular sequence of its reels leads Lucas Hilderbrand to identify reel twelve as the film’s climax, and to identify the structure of *Couch* as mimicking “dirty movies”:

For peep show loops, the structure was that of the tease. Each reel promised to show more skin, more sex, more than had ever been seen before, in exchange for more coins in the slot. The temporality was one of delayed but promised gratification...

For sexploitation features, the structure was one of indifference. In grindhouse theaters, films often played continuously, so that a viewer could walk in off the street, watch awhile, jerk off, lose interest, and leave. It didn’t matter if one came in at the beginning or not, because the viewer probably wasn’t going to make it to the end. Walk in, watch awhile, move on. This seems to me to be the way to watch Warhol’s films.⁸⁸

Hilderbrand’s model spectator in this scenario is attuned to a particular film genre: the dirty movie, whose traditional purpose is to provide sexual arousal to assist in his own masturbatory activities.⁸⁹ Although the spectator’s engagement with the film results in his

⁸⁸ Hilderbrand, “Sex Out of Sync,” 17–18.

⁸⁹ Studies of pornographic cinema and its history, including the stag film, include Al Di Lauro and Gerald Rabkin, *Dirty Movies: An Illustrated History of the Stag Film, 1915–1970* (New York: Chelsea House, 1976); Thomas Waugh, *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Linda Williams, *Hard-Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); and Linda Williams, ed., *Porn Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). According to Waugh, “The stag film may be defined historically as an explicit sexual narrative, produced and distributed, usually commercially, to clandestine, nontheatrical male audiences, between 1908 and 1970, principally in Europe and America...The corpus of the stag film seems to include about two thousand films made prior to the hardcore theatrical explosion of 1970, of which three quarters were made after 1960.” (Waugh, *Hard to Imagine*, 309.) This chronology actually situates *Couch* within the 1960s heyday of stag film production. In

own engagement with his body, his attachment to the film is ultimately one of indifference to its overall structure as a discrete entity. The immediate payoff of sexual gratification is the main purpose of the film.

In treating *Couch* as a dirty movie, Hilderbrand relates the film to characterizations of sex as abstract. He cites part of the following quotation from Roy Grundmann's book on *Blow Job* to support his conception of abstracted sex, a more extensive version of which I have transcribed here to facilitate my own analysis:

Because sex and sexual arousal produce direct bodily reactions, we always think of sex as something concrete—an immediate experience. But for Warhol, sex had a distinctly abstract quality. This notion may easily mislead us into accepting the cliché that Warhol was sexless and afraid to have relationships (neither of which was true). Rather Warhol saw the world through the eyes of an artist, and a gay one at that. While gay men have been known for their proclivity to detach sex from the contexts that surround it (enjoying sex in *any* context for sex's own sake), they have also shown a particular talent for putting sex into multiple contexts—that is, for seeing sex connected to myriad mundane, seemingly nonsexual aspects of life. This is what Warhol did. He consistently saw and depicted sex as an aesthetic experience mediated by the many contexts in which it occurred, none of which, as the heterogeneity of his work attests, was privileged.⁹⁰

Hard-Core, Williams identifies a fundamental characteristic of the early stag film as “primitivism” consisting of a “radical narrative discontinuity,” which results in part from the stringing together of short individual reels containing sex scenes to create a completed film. (Williams, *Hard-Core*, 63.) However, and somewhat in contrast to Hilderbrand's description of the stag film, Williams also specifies that although each individual reel within a stag film may have no relation to the one that comes before or after it, the some stag films’ “primitivism is not unfocused...Not only does it center and fix the genital details of the sexual couplings that constitute its primary action, but it does so obsessively and repetitively—though without also providing temporal continuity. It is as if, having mastered the limited degree of narrative technique necessary to bring the hard-core genital action into focus for the spectator, the stag film was then content to offer up these details as so many discontinuous spectacles, each separate shot being, we are to infer, a good enough show in itself.” (Williams, *Hard-Core*, 65.)

⁹⁰ Roy Grundmann, *Andy Warhol's Blow Job* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 3. Emphasis in original. When quoting Grundmann in his own essay, Hilderbrand omits the first three sentences of the above quotation. (Hilderbrand, “Sex Out of Sync,” 22–23.)

It is true that Warhol often depicted sex as connected to—quite literally as taking place alongside—a variety of mundane activities, and he often contextualized the sexual activity in his films within settings that were quotidian or even absurd—as evidenced in several reels of *Couch*. But does this approach to sex qualify as abstract? To juxtapose sex with the everyday—is this to abstract sex? Hilderbrand seems to think so. His interpretation of abstracted sex reifies sexual actions, and places them seemingly outside the realm of specificity: “Sex was beyond the self because it was everywhere; Warhol’s view of sex as all-constitutive at times can be experienced as impersonal or abstract.”⁹¹ Like Grundmann, Wayne Koestenbaum describes sex in Warhol’s artworks as abstract, and then traces this abstraction back to the artist himself. Both writers believe variations of the same idea: that Warhol was conveying his own personal attitude toward sex through his representations of sex. Koestenbaum links this idea directly to *Couch* when he draws this conclusion after his own discussion of the film: “Warhol and his cast knew what they were up to: abstracting sexuality from its particulars. *Abstract* was Andy’s favorite word to describe sex. Sex was abstract because it was not just a feeling or an action but a complicated interpersonal system, a set of signs and practices, remote from Mr. Paperbag’s—or anybody’s—internal storied turmoil.”⁹²

All of these assertions, with regard to Warhol’s and his colleagues’ approach to sex, are not to my mind incorrect or insignificant—nor is their efficacy really at issue for me. But I think it is important to point out that all of these writers are essentially

⁹¹ Hilderbrand, “Sex Out of Sync,” 23.

⁹² Wayne Koestenbaum, *Andy Warhol* (New York: Penguin, 2001), 87. Emphasis in original. Mr. Paperbag is, of course, Warhol himself. Koestenbaum is referring to a nickname Warhol had during the 1940s, “Andy Paperbag,” which derived from his carrying his advertising portfolio to meetings in a paper bag.

identifying feelings about sex and an approach to sex that existed, if they existed at all, within the minds of Warhol and those who participated in his films—but which are not necessarily visible in *Couch*, nor for that matter in many of his other films that contain sexual content. On the contrary, I would argue that if the tendencies toward abstraction that these scholars describe—the association of sex to a variety of other activities, sex as an aesthetic experience mediated by the everyday, the identification of sex as something outside the self and existing as a system of signs, as removed from immediate experience—had any influence over the production of *Couch*, the result is nevertheless a film that depicts sex as decidedly concrete. Like Tyler's characterization of Warhol's films as *cinema concrèt*, the sex in *Couch*, like many other activities in the film, operates as a visual tautology: sex is sex; when the sex looks arousing it is arousing; when it is in the background, it is in the background. It is a fact of life, just like vacuuming, or eating bananas, or talking to people, or doing a handstand, or being strung out on speed, or smoking a cigarette. All of these activities might have a metaphoric meaning or a broader cultural implication if we choose to ascribe one to them. To be sure, in some cases, the sex itself does become stylistically or formally abstracted—we see fragments of body parts, the visual pairing of pinup girl and motorcycle, prosthetic monster limb and penis. But—and this is where Grundmann's discussion of Warhol's films is most insightful—there is nothing in the film itself that privileges the meaning of sex over the meaning of any of these other events. The indifference that spectators might feel, as Hilderbrand says he does, toward figures or objects that obscure or upstage the sexual events in *Couch* is not a result of the sex being abstract; it is due to expectations by the spectator that sex

should somehow figure more prominently than it does. Such expectations are what lead Hilderbrand to identify *Couch* as belonging to the genre of the dirty movie, to ascribe the status of climax to its twelfth reel, and to ignore the film in its multifarious entirety.⁹³

Another way, I think, to watch Warhol's movies relates to Jonathan Flatley's characterization of Warhol's Pop attitude toward the world around him, which entails "liking things": objects, people, actions, and ideas. For example, instead of thinking that no one event or action in *Couch* appears privileged over any of the others, it might be more apt to think about them *all* as decidedly privileged—as intimate and concrete—not "impersonal and abstract." All of the subjects in Warhol's films are, for him, in a sense potentially collectible, simply by virtue of the fact that they are recordable on film. No one thing is more collectible than another, and the act of selection makes the object valuable to the collector through a process of recontextualization. As Flatley points out, this is appropriation, and it involves an affective attachment on the part of the collector to achieve the transformation from anonymous thing to personal possession. It involves not detachment or indifference, but involvement—engagement. In other words, to take Warhol's ideas about "liking things" as being not a strategy for minimizing the importance of all things, but for elevating all things to a place of privilege, and to have that elevation be not a put-on, but dead serious, would make way for a re-evaluation of the actions in, say, *Eat*—the 1963 silent film in which for ten three-minute reels the artist

⁹³ Hilderbrand, in reading reel twelve of *Couch* as a climax, ultimately relegates all prior reels to the realm of failure: "In contrast to the early scenes of failed connection, the film's climax is one of complete and sensitive human union. In contrast to so much of Warhol's work, which refuses narrative satisfaction, *Couch* provides a profound telos, a utopian ending, one that, in comparison to the performance and pretext of the project, seems somehow improbably genuine." (Hilderbrand, "Sex Out of Sync," 12.)

Robert Indiana sits in a rocking chair by a window, sometimes eats a mushroom, sometimes stares at spaces past the camera or into the camera, and sometimes pets his cat—so that it becomes just as special and stimulating as *Couch*. Both are films that depict things Warhol likes—and, I would argue, with the fervor of an avid collector, not of a detached observer.⁹⁴ According to this logic, each three-minute reel of *Couch* then becomes an object in a particular arrangement, all around a common material theme: the couch. The actions on and around that couch become variations on that theme, no scene more or less significant, but all equally precious.

* * *

My reading of Warhol's affective attachment to the subjects of his films may initially seem at odds with interpretations of Warhol that are based on his mechanical, even indifferent, approach to artistic production. The connection between Warhol's artist-as-machine persona and his propensity for liking things is, however, inextricable and in fact quite literal. Gene Swenson's seminal interview "What Is Pop Art?" which appeared in the November 1963 issue of *Art News*, contains perhaps one of the most cited Warhol interviews, and with good reason. According to Gerard Malanga, Swenson hid his tape recorder under the table while talking to Warhol, and as a result, the interview captures an unusually candid Warhol, quite unlike the baffling, wittily aloof persona of many of his contemporary television and print interviews from the early 1960s.⁹⁵ In his responses to Swenson, Warhol focuses repeatedly on the relationship between style and trends in

⁹⁴ So within this rubric, Warhol's presence—whether he was actually there, looking through the camera at the moment of filming—becomes less important than the fact that Warhol chose what he wanted, and then knew that he would then have it, as an object, on film.

⁹⁵ Gerard Malanga interviewed in Patrick S. Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films*, 393.

the art world. Ultimately, his characterization of style is that it is a false front. Style is the aspect of art that people use to categorize trends, but at the expense of what is underneath the style—namely content. The first column of Swenson's interview contains two now iconic Warholisms (Swenson's questions are in italics):

I think everybody should be a machine.

I think everybody should be like everybody.

Is that what Pop Art is all about?

Yes, it's liking things.

And liking things is like being a machine?

Yes, because you do the same thing every time. You do it over and over again.⁹⁶

This reference to repetition naturally calls to mind Warhol's silkscreen paintings of the same image repeated on a single canvas, or his series of paintings produced with the same screen. The page in *Art News* with Swenson's interview includes an image of Warhol's *Black and White Disaster, 4* (1963), a mosaic of the same photographic image of a car crash repeated over a dozen times across the entire surface of the vertical canvas [figure 5]. But later in the interview, the idea of doing the same thing over and over again takes on a different meaning, one not confined to the composition of a painting, when Warhol begins to discuss style:

And how many painters are there? Millions of painters and all pretty good. How can you say one style is better than another? You ought to be able to be an Abstract-Expressionist next week, or a Pop artist, or a realist, without feeling you've given up something. I think the artists who aren't very good should become like everybody else so that people would like things that aren't very good. It's already happening. All you have to do is read the magazines and the catalogues. It's this style or that style, this or that image of man--but that really doesn't make any difference. Some artists get left out that way, and why should they?

⁹⁶ G. R. [Gene] Swenson, "What Is Pop Art? Part I," *ARTnews* 62, no. 70 (November 1963): 26.

Is Pop Art a fad?

Yes, it's a fad, but I don't see what difference it makes. I just heard a rumor that G. quit working, that she's given up art altogether. And everyone is saying how awful it is that A. gave up his style and is doing it in a different way. I don't think so at all. If an artist can't do any more, then he should just quit; and an artist ought to be able to change his style without feeling bad.⁹⁷

Here Warhol reduces all styles, like Pop art, to fads. Style becomes the placeholder for the artist's identity, the way her work accrues value and recognition. To switch to another style is to “give up something”; an artist cannot be associated with more than one style. For Warhol, most artists are “pretty good,” and their adherence to a particular style ultimately does not make a difference as to how journalists and critics receive the work, because they treat all styles the same way—as fads. The mechanism of how art becomes popular or dominant, the cycle of artist as style and style as a fad, ensures that no one style is truly better than the other; they become the same thing every time, over and over again.

What's more, for Warhol the idea that an artist cannot switch styles has negative implications for the artist; it feels bad to depart from a prescribed style. We might extrapolate from Warhol's statement that it also feels bad not to switch. If an artist feels a desire to change from one style to another but then feels obligated not to due to outside pressure to maintain a particular association between her identity and her work, then remaining with a style that no longer appeals to her could feel frustrating or oppressive. Contending with style, then, can be emotionally fraught; as Warhol famously said in

⁹⁷ Swenson, “What Is Pop Art?” 26.

another interview, “It would be so much easier not to care.”⁹⁸ Toward the end of his interview with Swenson, Warhol alludes to a strategy that may avoid style altogether, so that only content—specifically sexual content—would remain:

My next series will be pornographic pictures. They will be blank; when you turn on the black lights, then you see them--big breasts and...If a cop came in, you could just flick out the lights or turn on the regular lights—how could you say that was pornography? But I'm still just practicing with these yet. Segal did a sculpture of two people making love, but he cut it all up, I guess because he thought it was too pornographic to be art. Actually it was very beautiful, perhaps a little too good, or he may feel a little protective about art. When you read Genêt you get all hot, and that makes some people say this is not art. The thing I like most about it is that it makes you forget about style and that sort of thing; style isn't really

⁹⁸ *USA Arts: Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol*, television interview with Lane Slate, WNET, New York, 1966. Viewed on VHS transfer, The Andy Warhol Museum, Fall 2008. Available at Open Culture, accessed 6 March 2013,

http://www.openculture.com/2012/09/roy_lichtenstein_and_andy_warhol_demystify_their_pop_art_in_vintage_1966_film.html. This is one of the most famous interviews of Warhol, and it appears in several documentaries about him. Warhol's interview takes place after a very articulate Lichtenstein, sitting in his studio, discusses Pop art as exemplary of a “modern sensibility,” which his Ben Day-dotted paintings exemplify by celebrating a modern “industrialized,” “commercial” technique that utilizes flat color and texture. Slate's voice does not intervene at all during Lichtenstein's interview, which is in marked contrast to Warhol's interview, which appears immediately after Lichtenstein's. Warhol, who is dressed in a leather jacket and dark glasses and sitting on a stool in front of two of his *Elvis* paintings with his fingers resting on his slightly open lips, says that he is “so empty today” and asks Slate to tell him what to say and he will just repeat the words back for his part of the interview. Warhol, sometimes smirking, then proceeds dumbly to repeat certain phrases that Slate says. Eventually the interview cuts to a scene of Warhol and Malanga in the process of silkscreening a painting, as Slate's voice-over narration explains Warhol's technical process. It is when the film cuts back to the interview, and Slate says to Warhol that many people seem to put Warhol down because his work implies a certain distance, or they might accuse him of not making his own artworks, but “when you start to talk about it the things you say are about really caring, I mean you want people's lives to be better.” Warhol replies, “Aaaaahhhh...yeah well I guess I really don't know, uh, it's too hard to care, I guess I, uh I well I-I, I still care but I mean it would be so much easier not to care...ahh.” During the rest of the interview, Warhol does eventually discuss some of his work, including his silver clouds and his multimedia project with the Velvet Underground, which would eventually become the Exploding Plastic Inevitable. For a transcript of this interview, see Kenneth Goldsmith, ed. *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004), 79–84. Peter Gidal publishes a variation of Warhol's quotation that “it would be so much easier not to care” in his book *Andy Warhol Films and Paintings*. Warhol, speaking about the anonymous subjects of his Death and Disaster series, such as those in his silkscreens of people jumping out of skyscrapers, says, “It's not that I feel sorry for them, it's just that people go by and it doesn't really matter to them that someone unknown was killed...I still care about people but it would be so much easier not to care, it's too hard to care.” Gidal does not cite his source for this quotation. (Peter Gidal, *Andy Warhol's Films and Paintings: The Factory Years* [New York: Da Capo Press, 1971], 38.) Benjamin Buchloch cites Gidal's quotation in his essay “Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956–1966,” in *Andy Warhol*, ed. Annette Michelson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 27.

important.⁹⁹

Warhol's description of these black light pictures is a sort of tongue-in-cheek jab at critiques of art that focus solely on style as a marker of quality. His speculation that an artist would actually destroy an artwork because he thinks it is "too good" suggests that current metrics for evaluating the quality of art based on formal characteristics of style are actually detrimental.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, his proposed pornographic pictures, invisible images on seemingly blank surfaces that only become visible when the lights are out and a special light shines on them, have a conceptual affinity to cinema. Like films, the relationship between the materiality of the object (the reel of film/the picture support) and the subject matter (the actions captured on the film/the content of the paintings) is not

⁹⁹ Swenson, "What is Pop Art?" 60. Reva Wolf uses this quotation in her discussion of Genet as an influence for Warhol. (Wolf, *Andy Warhol, Poetry, and Gossip*, 111–117.) Warhol never made these black-light pornographic pictures, but in the 1980s he did make a series of images of gemstones with treated paint and diamond dust. Diamond dust is not actually fluorescent, but when placed under a UV light the paintings do glow. They are not, however, invisible when not under the UV light—just less luminous and muted in color. In the 1970s, Warhol also did a series of Nudes—silkscreens of nude male and female body parts. See Jack Bankowsky, Alison M. Gingeras and Catherine Wood, *Pop Life: Art in a Material World* (London: Tate Publishing, 2009), 94–97; Linda Nochlin, "'Sex Is So Abstract': The Nudes of Andy Warhol," in *Andy Warhol Nudes*, ed. John Cheim (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁰ In his description, Warhol has actually conflated form and style; he implies that if the formal qualities of the pornographic pictures are insignificant, then discussions of style would become moot. In the following paragraphs, I similarly elide the terms "form" and "style." This is partly due to Warhol's own conflation of the terms, since I am using his definition of style to a certain extent for my own analysis. Another reason that form and style become so intertwined in my argument is, I think, because in the 1960s the two terms were also intertwined in a broader context than just the interview between Warhol and Swenson. My MA thesis is a discourse analysis of the battle against so-called formalist critics and Robert Smithson, which played out in the writings of Michael Fried and Smithson, who both relied heavily on Clement Greenberg's criticism to formulate their own ideas about the significance of formal qualities in evaluating contemporary art in the 1960s. See Introduction, n. 46. Both Smithson and Swenson deride what they call "formal" evaluations of art because they tend to privilege work that reflects formalist critics' standards for abstract "purity." Swenson's *The Other Tradition* is a call to reinstate evaluations of particular stylistic categories or movements that involve representational art with recognizable subject matter (e.g., Cubist, surrealist, Dada, and Pop artworks) based on content, not form. (Swenson, "Introduction," *The Other Tradition*, vii–viii.) He also conflates formal qualities and style in his essay, or at least is unclear at times how style functions in relation to form. For example: "Change, variety, and the exaltation of individuality are more characteristic of twentieth century art than any evolution of formal values. Formal values—style, at least—reached a point of equilibrium with subject matter in classical Cubism." (Swenson, "The Limits of Classical Cubism," *The Other Tradition*, 9.)

fully integrated. In other words, the materiality of film and of the black light paintings does not necessarily function as a locus of meaning. It is essential as a vehicle for content, of course, but in nothing more than a utilitarian capacity. Ultimately, the black light pictures would be as absent of formal qualities as possible; critiquing them based on factors such as the picture plane or color would be ludicrous. And it is because of this disconnect between form and content that discussions of style—which often utilize formal evaluations to characterize each artist’s individual style or the style of an artistic movement—become useless for understanding the goals of the artist. To comprehend these pornographic pictures on their own terms would require looking past the blank surfaces of the paintings, in the dark, with the aid of a technological intermediary (the projector/the black light) and considering sexual content seriously as art. And as Warhol suggests with this interpretation of Segal destroying his own sculpture, to take sexual content seriously could damage the idea of art if art relies on evaluations of style for its legitimacy. If people get too hot, they may forget about style; and how can the art world function without formal evaluations of style?

Although the pornographic black light pictures that Warhol describes in his interview with Swenson never materialized, *Couch* serves as a sort of filmic exemplar of the pictures’ conceptual implications. As the film progresses, it becomes increasingly difficult to characterize it simply in terms of its formal style. Although certain stylistic elements—the black and white film, the slow motion, the artistic lighting, and the stationary camera—are absolutely present and integral to parts of the film, to privilege these characteristics over the actions, sexual and otherwise, taking place on the screen

would be to miss a crucial aspect of the film. Ultimately, *Couch* has much more to do with fucking than with form, and even then, fucking is not the only content in the film worth discussing. A major part of the significance of *Couch* lies in its treatment of its different subjects, not in the way Warhol's stylistic approach aligns with a histories of 1960s avant-garde filmmaking that are based on formal considerations. If discussions of style have a place in a film like *Couch*, they should, for instance, include evaluations of the different representations of sex taking place on the screen, and how these different variations, or styles, of fucking might have implications for myriad sexual communities and their attendant, potential feelings about sex—as arousing, as mundane, as playful, or as dangerous.

Kenneth Goldsmith, in his editorial preface to a reprint of Swenson's interview, suggests that it is likely Swenson embellished his dialogue with Warhol in "What Is Pop Art?" and inserted much of his own language into Warhol's responses. Goldsmith cites specifically the closing paragraph of the interview, in which Warhol refers to an article entitled "The End of the Renaissance?" from a recent issue of *The Hudson Review*, which he suspects Warhol did not read.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, knowing the truth about the level of

¹⁰¹ Kenneth Goldsmith, ed. *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004), 15. The *Hudson Review* article is a discussion of the significance of contemporary musicians' and visual artists' utilization of randomness through chance operations or the abandonment of formal structures. Its author, Leonard B. Meyer, cites John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg, among several others, as exemplary of this trend. Meyer says of the effects of music that utilizes such "anti-teleological" randomness: "But the music of the avant-garde directs us toward no points of culmination—establishes no goals toward which to move. It arouses no expectations, except presumably it will stop. It is neither surprising nor, once you get used to its sounds, is it particularly startling. It is simply *there*." (Leonard B. Meyer, "The End of the Renaissance?" *The Hudson Review* 16, no. 2 [Summer 1963]: 173.) Patrick S. Smith uses Warhol's citation of this article as an example of how, although Warhol may have acted vacuous or detached, he was actually keenly aware of his peers and the types of critical recognition they received. (Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films*, 93.)

Swenson's involvement in the final text as it appears in *Art News* is impossible; although Swenson could have attributed his own words to Warhol, Warhol could have actually read the article, or simply mentioned it because somebody else mentioned it to him.¹⁰² Either way, the conversation seems to have made an impression on Swenson, because aspects of Warhol's statements reappear in his catalog essay for *The Other Tradition*, an exhibition he curated at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Philadelphia in early spring of 1966. A main premise underlying Swenson's essay is the idea that evaluations of art based on style or formal qualities can obscure, or even completely erase, the complex content of much contemporary art. He offers *The Other Tradition* and its catalog essay as a sort of manifesto, a corrective to the reductive and formalist art criticism that he believes is dominating and stifling contemporary art discourse. (He cites the writing of Michael Fried and Barbara Rose specifically.) The stakes in Swenson's argument are epistemological; he is interested in how people—the dominant formalist critics in particular, but ultimately all viewers—come to understand works of art, and to connect them with one another: "To repeat, one of the more interesting and useful questions in the history of criticism is why critics come to an agreement on the trends and movements—that is, why they think as they do."¹⁰³ To begin to answer this question, Swenson suggests that one must acknowledge that the terminology promoted by formalist criticism perpetuates a sort of epistemological prison, from which its prisoner-practitioners cannot

¹⁰² As of this writing, I have not been able to locate Swenson's papers; there are no records of his archive at any major research or special collections libraries or on Worldcat. After he died, his art collection was given to the University of Kansas. E-mails with that University's museum and special collections libraries yielded no leads.

¹⁰³ Swenson, "The Problem with Form," *The Other Tradition* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1966), 14.

even conceive of new ways of seeing and thinking: “How much longer will we rest content with our defective and infectious critical tools and our academic standards? How many more times can we see the words ‘picture plane’, ‘modernism’, ‘crisis’, ‘new’ and ‘literary’ without flushing?”¹⁰⁴

In a passage eerily reminiscent of ideas attributed to Warhol in “What is Pop Art?” Swenson discusses what he calls “post-Freudian” artworks—works that contain sexual content, but that do not necessarily address sexuality in the Freudian sense. In other words, the works of these artists, who are a generation younger than Warhol, think of sex as a fact of culture, but not as a sublimated psychological force underlying and driving culture:

Three young artists, Joe Raffaele, Paul Thek, and Mike Todd might be called post-Freudian. They are not, however, sexually obsessed nor are they pornographers; but sex is a more important and conscious part of their content than is usually the case. As in pornography, the erotic and sensual are not a subclass of love or tragedy; unlike pornography, there is an integration of sexual with poetic and even moral feelings. The erotic is turned toward a wider range of human possibilities.

The works (and those of Lucas Samaras, Allen Jones, and several other young artists) can and perhaps should, if successful, arouse the viewer sensually and sexually. Like Genet they use this quality to suppress what is ordinarily called style: is one conscious of style when one is “hot and bothered”? We are apt, in the later twentieth century, to know more about why we do something than what we do—we resist “hot” conscious involvement.¹⁰⁵

Swenson suggests that viewers, including critics, of mid-1960s contemporary art have turned a blind eye to content—here specifically sexual content—in favor of formalist preoccupations with style. The so-called post-Freudian artists, then, have responded to

¹⁰⁴ Swenson, “Afterword,” *The Other Tradition*, 40.

¹⁰⁵ Swenson, “Art as Exploration,” *The Other Tradition*, 35.

this privileging of style by creating work that is deliberately sexual, and therefore distracting to viewers who would rather concentrate solely on the formal qualities of an artwork instead of the feelings aroused in them by the content of the works.

Swenson identifies the post-Freudians as descendants of an artistic lineage whose roots lie in concepts explored by proponents of Dada and Surrealism, which were subsequently adopted by Pop artists. In the section of his catalog essay entitled “The Problem with Form,” Swenson identifies this “*other* tradition” as an alternative historical perspective that includes works that early formalist critics often dismissed as “literary.” Dada and Surrealist works, according to “the *formal* tradition,” lacked the plastic integrity of significant form (a quality more akin to poetry), and instead let plasticity take a backseat to literature. In other words, Dada and Surrealism seemed to rely more on content than form. Swenson argues that because of this early dismissal of Dada and Surrealism as literary, proponents of the formal tradition misunderstood the conceptual underpinnings of both movements. And as a result, critics who focus more on the formal elements of an artwork—Swenson refers to both Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg as perpetrators of this tendency—failed to recognize or acknowledge the legacy of either Dada or Surrealism, and instead used them as foils for the work that they championed, especially Abstract Expressionism. Eventually, this suppression of the other traditions of Dada and Surrealism led to a total misreading by these same critics of Pop art as an illegitimate or sub-standard artistic development.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Swenson, “The Problem with Form,” 11–13. Swenson identifies Greenberg and Rosenberg as formalists according to his own interpretation of each critics’ writings. After a description of Greenberg’s 1963 lecture “After Pop Art,” Swenson states, “Greenberg assumes that any but formal criticism is a return to

For Swenson, Warhol and his artworks play a major role in the genealogy of the other tradition, because they transform the role of the artist and the function of art into more than just conveyors of emotion. In another section of the catalog essay, “Feelings Are Things,” Swenson introduces the concept of the Dada mechanical man, and speculates about its epistemological implications, and how it might function as an approach to making art. The mechanical man evokes for Swenson “the exciting aspect of man, not as knower of what could be known, but a partially receptive receiver of light, sound, heat and other kinds of mass-energy wavelengths.” Swenson employs an analogy of man as a “radar instrument” to elaborate this idea:

A radar instrument measures a multitude of wave lengths which exist both in the atmosphere and the objects toward which it is turned (though not, by any means, all). An object, such as an airplane, both interrupts certain “established” wave lengths and often emits wave lengths of its own. It is these few on which an observer fixes his attention, and eventually determines by their nature what to think of the objects. So is man such a receiving instrument.¹⁰⁷

Later in *The Other Tradition*, Swenson obliquely connects this idea of man as machine to Warhol by referring to his interview from “What is Pop Art?”:

what is rightly considered the out-moded ‘socially oriented’ criticism in America during the thirties. He does not allow for the possibility that Pop Art is ‘tasteful’ in his terms because the breaking of esthetic habits has become such a habit that it is no longer truly viable for many younger painters.” Of Rosenberg, Swenson says, “As Harold Rosenberg put it in 1952, ‘The test of any new painting is its seriousness—and the test of its seriousness is the degree to which the act on canvas is an extension of the artist’s total effort to make over his experience.’ A few artists during the mid-fifties believed that they were somehow reaching a summit in artistic expression. One artist reportedly said, ‘Abstract art will last a thousand years.’” This is a prime example of how Swenson’s opposition to the dominance of formal evaluations of art often lead him to categorize some critics, such as Rosenberg who connects the artist’s feelings to some formal elements of (presumably abstract) painting, as formalists. (Swenson, “The Problem with Form,” 11–12.

¹⁰⁷ Swenson, “Feelings Are Things,” *The Other Tradition*, 20. In this publication, the title above the body of this essay reads, “Feelings and Things,” but the title page as well as the citation of the title of this section in Swenson’s Introduction to *The Other Tradition* reads “Feelings Are Things.” (Swenson, “Introduction,” viii.)

Warhol's silk-screened electric chairs, suicides, and gangster funerals are processed images. Warhol has said that he wants to suppress the personality and become a machine, to make pictures that might as well be made by anyone else. Some of us doubt that the pictures could be made by anyone else; nevertheless it is possible to see the artist's intention in this respect—no matter how good or artistic these pictures may seem for many of us.¹⁰⁸

It is possible to extrapolate from this statement that Warhol's intention as an artist, if he behaves like a radar instrument, is not to respond to his own inner feelings and motivations, but instead to absorb information from the outside world and to display what he absorbs with as little reference to his own emotive response about the subjects as possible. In other words, he objectifies all that he apprehends, whether he apprehends people, actions, emotions, or ideas; his role as an artist is not to differentiate between these subjects, but to present them as concrete—as things. For Swenson, it is not so much that Warhol's personality is totally absent from his artworks (he suggests that this might in fact be impossible) but that his effort to suppress it is nonetheless significant.

One implication of applying this concept of man as radar instrument to Warhol's films is that instead of seeing Warhol as a detached observer, he becomes a highly susceptible receiver and processor of information, to the point where he suppresses his own creativity to represent with as little intervention as possible the events the camera captures. Furthermore, other people's feelings and opinions, like all other aspects of the external world, are part of this process of appropriation, and qualify as objects of interest. As Swenson argues, the artworks that are the products of these efforts resist interpretations that privilege the artist's emotive self-expression—the idea of the artwork

¹⁰⁸ Swenson, "Art as Exploration," *The Other Tradition*, 37.

as a receptacle for the artist's personal feelings or original ideas. Instead, the artworks produced by the radar instrument are products of the artist's preparation of a proper environment to capture the information he absorbs, but not necessarily to interpret it. From this perspective, then, Warhol's choices about whom he talks to about ideas for artworks, whom he shares his time with, which ideas he uses, and how he decides to execute them are all choices integral to his art making.

So far I have laid out a process in which the feelings that motivate Warhol's choices about the content of his artworks are in no way visible or knowable in the work of art itself—just as the feelings that prompt a collector to choose a particular object for her collection do not reside in that discrete object, and just as Warhol's ideas about sex being abstract are not visible in *Couch*. In other words, if Warhol's process of selection involves emotion, Warhol makes no effort to include his personal feelings as part of his finished artworks, whether films or paintings. Nevertheless, according to Swenson, feelings do find their way into Warhol's works—just not in a form that may be obvious to a spectator conditioned to equate the emotion represented in an artwork with the emotions of the artist. Swenson's positioning of Warhol as a scion of a Dada-Surrealist tradition involves one last phase, in which he casts Warhol as a conceptual descendant of Dali's Surrealist approach to the world, specifically his paranoiac-critical method. Swenson defines the paranoiac-critical method as a persistent and willful mental state that reorients objects according to a preconceived idea about the material world. For example, like a clinical paranoiac, the surrealist paranoiac “is able to find concrete proof of persecution in the world of so-called reality,” because all objects conform to a reality that

the paranoiac creates and controls.¹⁰⁹ Such an approach to the material world could potentially transform the meaning of everyday objects, and would break down the barrier between subjective and objective, reality and fantasy. Like the radar instrument, the paranoiac's version of reality absorbs all information, but then subsumes that information beneath a preordained structure of reality.

Ultimately for Swenson, the paranoiac-critical method has dramatic implications for the spectator of an artwork, in particular for the way he or she understands an image in terms of its emotional content: "The importance of Paranoiac Criticism, aside from the light it throws on Surrealism, lies in the suggestions it makes in the correspondence between feelings and things. This involves the viewer in a different relationship to 'art' than previously."¹¹⁰ Previously, in a more conventional context, a viewer would look at an image, of shoes for example, in a painting or even a film—Swenson cites both an image of boots from a scene in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* and van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes—and think of the shoes as a symbol for feelings:

objects have been used to create feelings and emotions in the viewer; the "correspondence" between feelings and things is symbolic. Two sets of feelings (at least) are involved: between the viewer and the victims of the boots [in *Potemkin*], and between the viewer and the peasant owner [in the van Gogh]. No identity of feelings, however, is intended. In a sense feelings are feelings (and each feeling is separate) and things are things. Things are invested with feelings through the mediation (transformation) of the artist; the artist's means of doing this are traditional, namely through the sensitive infusion of "significant form."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Swenson, "Feelings Are Things," 23.

¹¹⁰ Swenson, "Feelings Are Things," 24.

¹¹¹ Swenson, "Feelings Are Things," 24–25. Interestingly, twenty-five years later, Frederic Jameson also uses a pairing of pictures of shoes to aid in his definition of postmodernism. For Jameson, Van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots* and Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* represent two ideological poles. Van Gogh's expressively painted subject matter opens up a world of suggestions and associations for the viewer—associations which for Jameson are potentially utopic. Warhol's photoreproduced and commercial looking shoes are for

When an artist removes himself from the role of a particular kind of mediator—as the sensitive infuser of significant form—the result is an absence of what is known as style. And style is the conduit that connects the artist to the artwork, and which maintains the traditional correspondence between feelings and things that Swenson describes. For Swenson, Warhol represents a new way of thinking about emotional content in art—one that is not reliant on the relationship between subject matter and emotions, and their relationship to the artist:

Andy Warhol's objects do not create emotions, as van Gogh's did, but Warhol gives you equivalents. The peasant shoes create a subjective situation; feelings are "created" in the viewer. Feelings, in a Warhol movie with its utterly impassive camera, are not differentiated from the object photographed; the emotion is the object the viewer sees, outside himself yet inside himself—like a mirror reflection. "Feeling" has been made concrete; old terms and ideas—"transformation," "evocation," "enrichment"—become destructive to what the artist is trying to do.¹¹²

According to Swenson, Warhol's films are exemplary of a new phenomenon, one that produces a different relationship between feelings and things than earlier, more conventional artwork by eradicating the conduit between feelings and things provided by style. Warhol's impassive camera is as devoid of stylistic flourish as it can be.

Unfortunately, Swenson does not refer to a particular Warhol film to exemplify his ideas.¹¹³ A still of *Sleep* was included in the exhibition at the ICA, and it is likely that

Jameson emblematic of a "flatless or depthlessness" and a "waning of affect," both of which he associates with postmodernism. (Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 5–9.

¹¹² Swenson, "Feelings Are Things," 25.

¹¹³ I do not intend this discussion of Swenson to result in a generalization about Warhol's films. Warhol produced plenty of films with camera movement and other stylistic tropes that Swenson and many other people likely did not see. Swenson's characterizations of Warhol's films are probably the result of a very

Swenson was familiar with other Warhol films from the early 1960s, such as *Eat or Blow Job*. Fortunately, Swenson's friend Gregory Battcock provides a description of *Blow Job* that can serve as a demonstration of how a spectator might read Warhol's film in terms of the emotions it contains. Here Battcock surveys the expressions on the face in *Blow Job*:

The expressions registering emotion and acknowledgment of the act on the part of the actor are limited and repetitive. They are enacted and reenacted with the regularity of a formula, but they nonetheless suggest at various times, boredom, mild ecstasy, some interest in the act, aloofness, and awareness of the camera.

That this could well be an accurate mirroring of a common reaction to sex is not without interest. One should note that at no time in this film is there any actual allusion to or depiction of sex. Sex is never plainly illustrated. Except for the collar of his leather jacket that occasionally appears on the screen, both the actor and the act are without Identity. It is neither a homosexual nor a heterosexual incident, but rather personal, human, and catholic.¹¹⁴

Battcock's description of the emotions registered on the actor's face (most people in the 1960s did not know that this actor was in fact an actor and not simply a hustler, let alone that he had a name: DeVerne Bookwalter), and his interpretation of them as "mirroring" the viewer's own likely feelings about sex, are matter-of-fact. There is no attribution of transcendence or symbolism; it is as deadpan as the title of the film and the gaze of the

limited sampling of his films, and the ones that were exhibited the most are those whose camera work is most static—hence the general tendency by critics to think that Warhol's unifying approach to cinema in the early 1960s was totally passive. Swenson and Warhol's relationship remains undocumented after their initial interview; though Swenson was friends with other people who frequented the Factory, most notably Gregory Battcock, it remains unclear whether Swenson attended any screenings of films at the Factory. More likely, he saw Warhol's films where most people saw them—in downtown theatre venues such as the Charles Street Theatre or at whichever location the peripatetic Filmmakers Cinematheque was using for its showings.

¹¹⁴ Gregory Battcock, "Humanism and Reality: Warhol and Thek," in *The New Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1966), 239–240. Swenson also published an interview with Thek around this time in *Art News*. See G. R. [Gene] Swenson, "Beneath the Skin," *Art News* 65, no. 2 (April 1966): 34–35, 66–67. For more on Swenson, Thek, and legacies of surrealism on art in the 1960s, see Scott Rothkopf, "Return of the Repressed: the Legacy of Surrealism in American Art," in *Surrealism USA*, ed. Isabelle Dervaux (New York: National Academy Museum, 2005), 66–75.

camera. And yet, the implications of a reading like this are significant because Battcock's description resists interpreting some hidden meaning in the film, and focuses instead on the emotions on the screen, which to him appear obvious. The film is there, the emotions are there, and easily recognizable to some viewers because they quite likely correspond to feelings that they have felt before.

This does not mean that each person's experience of *Blow Job* is the same, or that brilliant readings about its form and content, not to mention the film's potential for political transformation, are impossible—as several scholars have proven.¹¹⁵ What Warhol's concrete emotions do imply, however, is that the responsibility falls to the viewer to establish a significant relationship to the film. In a way, Warhol gives us the opportunity to mimic his own process of receiving information and then processing it and fitting it into our own idea of how the world works. This process does not necessarily involve transforming an object into something else, of conferring upon it the status of metaphor or symbol, but simply of acknowledging our own recognition of the object, and its place in our own emotional life. Such a process, I believe, makes it possible for Warhol, looking at Florine Stettheimer's paintings or Carmen Miranda's shoe, to realize his own status as an outsider in relation to a representation of a world that no longer exists, yet to establish a relationship with that world in spite of not fully understanding its history, and to invigorate his own present with that imagined history. This is the same

¹¹⁵ Some examples include Douglas Crimp, "Face Value," *Our Kind of Movie*, 1–16; Peter Gidal, *Andy Warhol: Blow Job* (London: Afterall Books, 2008).; Ron Grundmann *Andy Warhol's Blow Job*; and Ara Osterweil, "Andy Warhol's *Blow Job*: Toward the Recognition of a Pornographic Avant-garde," in *Porn Studies*, ed. Linda Williams (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 431–460.

process that a collector deliberately employs when acquiring a new object.¹¹⁶ It is also, for that matter, what we all do every day with the sensory information we receive, although we are rarely conscious of it; that lack of consciousness in this context is all that would separate us as spectators from Dali's paranoiac critic.

Battcock's analysis of *Blow Job* occurs in a 1966 essay called "Humanism and Reality: Warhol and Thek." Like Swenson, Battcock sees a direct connection between Pop art and the work of the slightly younger generation of "post-Freudian" artists (although Battcock never uses that term) who often employ sexual imagery in their work. In the case of Warhol and Thek, that implied connection actually became a reality; the two artists seem to have been interested in one another enough to execute at least two collaborative works together. One is a pair of *Screen Tests* of Thek, which Warhol filmed in 1964. Warhol apparently shot one of Thek's *Screen Tests* with the intention of including it in his series *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys*.¹¹⁷ For Warhol and Thek's other collaborative work, which Swenson included in his 1966 exhibition at MoMA called *Art in the Mirror*, Thek turned a Warhol Brillo box on its side, removed its bottom panel, and placed an encaustic meat piece inside it. He then covered the open end of the box with a panel of Plexiglas [figure 6]. Mike Kelley, over two decades after Battcock, also finds common ground between Warhol and Thek's artistic sensibilities, as well as

¹¹⁶ And if Warhol also collects feelings, or his films display recognizable feelings as concrete things, then this process also entails a petrification those feelings into things. Walter Benjamin explains: "It is the deepest enchantment of the collector to enclose the particular item within a magic circle, where, as a last shudder runs through it (the shudder of being acquired), it turns to stone. (Benjamin, "The Collector," 205.)

¹¹⁷ Callie Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, 201.

their historical significance. This is his description of Thek's *Meat in a Warhol Brillo*

Box:

At first it seems an unlikely pairing—the cool with the sexual, the hip with the foolish, the uninflected with the grotesque, the clean with the dirty. But then you realize that the connection lies in a kind of symmetrical perversity, in the strange parasitic relationship both of them have to the hard-edge aesthetic prevalent at the time. Thek's Plexiglas boxes reduce the minimalist aesthetic to display cases, while Warhol's boxes reduce it to commodities. In the collaborative piece, Warhol adopts the submissive role, becoming the surrogate defiled object, the stand-in for the derided primal form.¹¹⁸

It is interesting that Kelley ascribes the submissive role to Warhol—that his Brillo box is necessarily the defiled component of the work. Thek's meat piece, after all, has also been subsumed and somewhat sterilized by the commercial packaging of Warhol's box, complete with its logo of a cleaning product on its exterior. Perhaps defiled is not the best word to ascribe to either of these pieces. Instead of positioning the two elements of the sculpture as adversaries—or as two witty but opposing rebuttals to the dominance of Minimalism—we might think of each as informing the other. One could read the open end of this Brillo box, with its corpulent and unidentifiable hunk of flesh inside, as representing, ultimately, what might potentially lie inside all of Warhol's boxes. He left them empty so we might fill them with whatever we imagine.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Mike Kelley, "Death and Transfiguration [on Paul Thek]" (1992), *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 142.

¹¹⁹ In a way, this Thek/Warhol box is a dramatized, even perversely earnest manifestation of Michael Fried's complaint against "literalist" (now known as minimal or minimalist) art, in his 1965 essay "Art and Objecthood," "I am suggesting, then, that a kind of latent or hidden naturalism, indeed anthropomorphism, lies at the core of literalist theory and practice," and "what is wrong with literalist work is not that it is anthropomorphic but that the meaning and, equally, the hiddenness of its anthropomorphism are incurably theatrical." (Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998]: 157.)

I see the Warhol/Thek collaboration as an emblem: it represents a way of thinking about Warhol's films as containers for human content. This content includes feelings that run the gamut from boredom to disgust or sexual stimulation. As I said earlier, one aspect of *Couch*'s pornographic content is the ability of those images that reside within the frame to arouse the viewer sexually. This aligns *Couch* with the work of the post-Freudians, but as Swenson says, the post-Freudian artists who include sexual content in their artwork do so partly to remind us how little analyses of style and form can offer us in terms of understanding an artwork, if those strategies cause us to disregard content. Understanding an artwork, after all, should entail more than simply understanding the mechanics of its appearance, the materials that the artist utilized or how it occupies the world of physical, three-dimensional space. For Swenson, understanding art also requires acknowledging that all content, not just the sexual or pornographic, has the potential to stimulate us as viewers and is worthy of comprehension. By extension, Warhol's films as a whole, not just *Couch*, invite us to be active spectators—to invest in “‘hot’ conscious involvement” with them.

* * *

In his essay “Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Film Maker?” Tyler describes an occasion that he believes marked the inception of Warhol's interest in making films: a private screening of Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* at the offices of *Film Culture*, which probably took place in 1963. Tyler had invited his close friend Charles Henri Ford to the screening, and Ford had brought Warhol: “Unquestionably what most struck Warhol by the display on the screen that night was its easy-to-doness. Apparently you

just had to have personality-drive and picturesque obsessions: the queerer the better.”¹²⁰

In addition to discussing Warhol’s films as “cinema concret,” in this essay Tyler also identifies Warhol’s early approach to filmmaking as owing to “Some wandering devil of old Dada, by now Americanized but still frustrated.” He recognizes in Warhol’s minimal technique “a similar devil,” which influenced the restraint of style present in his Pop paintings. Style takes a back seat to content in both (remember Tyler’s observation about Warhol’s “studied inattentiveness to form”), even when the content is next to nothing. Tyler, like Swenson and Battcock, believes that the absence of style in Warhol’s films can lead to an experience in the spectator that is mirrorlike, and which depends on the spectator’s identification with the subject matter:

“How little I have to do with it,” Andy the film maker seems to be saying. “It’s your responsibility to detect the charm of life as it tick-tocks on.” It’s putting the show on our side of the peephole. When we see Blow Job, and possibly when we see Kiss, the neutrality of the reproducing medium, placed as if in a time vacuum, may verge on the ambiguous neutrality of the pool into which Narcissus looked. I am indicating the “whiteness,” the translucent neutrality, of Warhol’s peculiar medium. He suggests, flatteringly or insultingly, beautifully or horribly, our identity with what we see.¹²¹

Tyler’s reference to Narcissus serves as a metaphor for the rapt, unblinking attention that some viewers experience when watching Warhol’s films. For Tyler however, the spectator’s identification with the subject matter is not the only way to understand Warhol’s films. Another way to approach the same films is not to watch them at all:

If we expect to understand Warhol the horrible film maker or Warhol the beautiful film maker, we must clutch at the clue. All the apparent

¹²⁰ Parker Tyler, “Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Film Maker?” Harry Ransom Center, Parker Tyler Papers, Uncataloged box 2, undated, 1.

¹²¹ Tyler, “Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?” 8.

disinterestedness in the organization of his films is misleading if viewed in terms of their texts. He devotes film to an arbitrarily exclusive, infinitely self-indulgent, space-dominating single dimension of fact; not to certain facts, to “texts,” but to the dimension in which they exist. You can turn your back on it and leave the theatre at will. Quite literally, that is what Andy himself would do; he’d start the camera then abandon it, leave it to its own devicelessness by going off somewhere. Still the camera ground on, it was there, and the record it made could be brought back to life over and over.¹²²

The role of the film in this scenario has nothing to do with style, and even little to do with content, but rather with how the mechanism of the camera itself acts as a sort of superior being or memory bank. The camera records even while no one is watching—and it will project its findings faithfully whether the audience is present or not. It captures, and then reanimates, all manner of life events; nothing is too trivial. If we expect to understand Warhol’s films only in terms of formal style, or even simply in terms of what appears within the frame, we will never really circumscribe “the dimension in which they exist.” The subjects of Warhol’s films, Tyler suggests, are not objects divorced from their contexts, but context itself, and all that it contains. The role of the spectator in this scenario is as close to nil as it can be without the spectator becoming non-existent. In other words, the relentlessness with which the camera grinds on is such a given that one might qualify as a spectator even if he or she does not watch the film with undivided attention. One might simply be in the film’s presence, or even leave its presence, and be sure that the film would simply continue—as real and reliable as a concrete, material object.

¹²² Tyler, “Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?” 9.

According to this description of the relationship among the film, the camera, and the spectator, Warhol's role as filmmaker does not necessarily entail his personal involvement with the subjects of his films. But it has everything to do with his orchestrating the circumstances that allow for anything to happen during filming. To create such an environment requires restraint, or "apparent disinterestedness"—a seeming lack of interest that is actually, at bottom, a heightening of interest, a belief that all things are equally worthy of being filmed. The relationship between the camera and its subjects then, to echo Flatley, replicates the structure of feeling that constitutes Warhol's own relationships to the objects he collects. To be clear, the films in no way represent Warhol's own personal feelings; the films are not in any way a self-expression of the artist, but rather are receptacles for an entire spectrum of emotions that occur in front of and even around the camera.

Tyler has a similar understanding about Warhol's cinema. His essay contains several attributions of feeling, except that the emotions he identifies are not the artist's, or even the actors'. Instead, with a Surrealist flourish, he attributes all affective activity to the camera itself:

It's not irrelevant to note that Andy's camera does its part nobly: as nobly as if it were a member of this strange community. Like one of the more aggressive callers, it has squatted in an armchair or on a bed-edge and literally cornered its subjects so that, if an urge for privacy seized them, they'd have to crawl back of the bedboard... the overall of this crude, cranky, unceremonious coziness is the very temper of the life being caught, and crazily hugged, by the camera. A short-circuited lust for participation buzzes recklessly in things seen and thing seeing.¹²³

¹²³ Tyler, "Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?" 16. Tyler is referring here not only to those films where Warhol's camera remains stationary, but also to those that employ close-ups and "sudden spastic reflexes." Some examples that Tyler may have had in mind include *Kiss* (1964), which includes several close-ups of couples kissing; *Hedy* (1965), in which the camera zooms and pans erratically multiple times

Also, in this discussion of *The Chelsea Girls* (1966):

This camera abdicates from all responsibility except responsibility to what it photographs. In this respect, it is an exquisite mimic. When people gabble, it gabbles; when people freak out, it freaks out. Since people taking trips start automatically zooming, it starts automatically zooming...It's the ultimate empathizer.¹²⁴

One of Warhol's more significant achievements as a filmmaker is his transformation of himself into a sort of radar instrument, so that his camera empathizes with its subjects in a way that no person ever could. It stands unceremonious and unblinking, always identifying with its subjects, absorbing the environment in which they exist, and able to reconstitute the feelings of the moment it records each time the films are projected. As they play back to an audience, a spectator who is willing to submit to the hot, conscious involvement that this empathic camera makes available might be able to experience exactly what the camera did while filming. Sometimes, that experience is overwhelming, sexual, awkward, or funny; sometimes, it is boring, or worse—but it is not less.

throughout the film; and certain reels of *Chelsea Girls*, in particular the color reel "Eric Says All," which is likely a film of Eric Emerson's acid trip. The reference to subjects being "literally cornered" is probably a reference to *Beauty #2*, in which Edie Sedgwick and Gino Piserchio sit on a bed that sits in the corner of Sedgwick's bedroom. The camera remains trained on that corner of the room throughout the film, although much of the dialogue, and drama, occurs between Sedgwick, Piserchio, and Chuck Wein, who remains off screen for the film's entirety.

¹²⁴ Tyler, "Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?" 18.

Chapter Two: Drugtime

Andy Warhol's 1965 film *Afternoon* begins as many Warhol films made during that year begin—with an off-screen voice reciting the title and naming the stars: “with Edie Sedgwick, Bob Olivo, Dorothy Dean, Arthur Loeb, Donald Lyons.” We see the cast members huddled in Sedgwick's living room, lounging during what looks like a warm day in New York. The group seems languid during most of the first reel of this three-reel, 100-minute film.¹²⁵ They pour drinks into glasses from a large bottle of vodka, and Ondine retrieves a pepper shaker from the kitchen and suggests that everybody try some cracked pepper in their vodka. They declare that they are bored. Loeb makes a lame attempt to engage in stagey dialogue with Edie: “Isn't it wonderful that we can be just friends?” he says. They begin an exchange that fails to develop into banter. Somebody turns on the television and flips through some channels, pausing to watch a baseball game and then an opera performance. They chat about movies; Ondine wants to know if anybody has seen *Red Desert*. The Antonioni film was released in the U.S. on February 8, 1965, so based on this date and the fact that the actors are all dressed in light clothing, *Afternoon* was shot most likely in the spring or perhaps even the summer of 1965. Sedgwick recounts a trip to a “dyke bar” in Bridgehampton with Chuck (Wein) and Drella (Warhol), after which they walked the beach wearing black fur and carrying

¹²⁵ The 100-minute structure is due to the film being constructed by splicing together three 1200-foot rolls of unedited 16mm film. This is a common technique that Warhol used for many of his films from this period. Warhol and his screenwriter/collaborator Ronald Tavel made several films (such as *Vinyl* and *Horse*) using this convention, and those films also often feature a voice-over announcement of the credits. For more on Warhol and Tavel's collaboration, see Douglas Crimp, “Coming Together to Stay Apart,” *Our Kind of Movie* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012).

umbrellas. Later she mentions swimming in the ocean, and Ondine asks a person off camera, “Which beach, Chuck?” A voice, presumably that of Chuck Wein, answers, “The Hamptons.”¹²⁶

There is no plan here. The camera waits for something to happen, and for a long while it seems that nothing will. Eventually, though, Ondine and Sedgwick take the reins and the tenor of the group shifts. Ondine says to nobody in particular, “All of my drugs are locked up in the car. I wish I had them here.” Sedgwick mentions finding the keys, but Ondine already has them. An off-camera voice implores Sedgwick to explain her “space thing,” which is probably an attempt to get her to engage in a long monologue that would transform the film into another Sedgwick vehicle along the lines of *Beauty No. 2* or *Poor Little Rich Girl* (both 1965). At first Sedgwick is reticent: “Nobody wants to hear my space thing, it’s just me explaining why I am...it would take four hours and nobody wants to hear...no it’s true I usually impose it on people at the right time [laughs] but I’m sure it’s a great drag...” Ondine says he would love to hear about it. Sedgwick begins to explain that it’s about where human beings are going in the next 50,000 years. According to her, people are going to be out in space, literally, and this is going to require an entirely new way of thinking. Before she gets going on this subject, though, she asks Ondine about the drugs: “Oh Ondine are you going to get them?” and the reel washes out into white leader.

¹²⁶ Although Chuck Wein was present during the shooting of this film, there is no evidence that he was behind the camera. Throughout the film, Warhol’s voice is audible giving the actors directions on where to move and what to do.

By the time the second reel begins recording, the conversation has shifted to a discussion of Eddie Fisher and Elizabeth Taylor. The camera closes in on Ondine, who must have gone out to the car, because he is holding a small vial of white powder. For the next few minutes, as the conversations continue, the camera vigilantly observes Ondine as he dispenses the drugs into everybody's drinks, first using the end of a spoon, and then the temple of a pair of eyeglasses, and then a small slip of paper. After dosing all the drinks, he then snorts some powder up his nose. Somebody asks Sedgwick to describe outer space in 100 words or less. Suddenly, and in distinct contrast to the first reel, the second reel snaps into conceptual focus. We see the drugs on the screen, and we hear Sedgwick explain how humans need to get used to new speeds, speeds up to a thousand miles per hour. She says that humans will destroy their minds if they are not equipped to handle the way time and speed has been changed by machines. After a few minutes, the group is obviously more energized. Lyons, who has been the quietest thus far, moves to screen right with his back to the crowd, and begins wrapping a scarf around his head. When he is finished fashioning a small turban, he whirls around and begins singing energetically, "I'm Chiquita banana and I'm here to say..." Soon after Lyons's campy performance, Ondine turns an opera record on very loud, walks out of the frame and grabs what must have been the only microphone, because his voice drowns out all the other conversations: "Hello America. This is your gay one speaking. They're telling me to carry on but I want to level with you America, Maria Callas is God. She's Buddha, or whatever." Ondine continues his short monologue as the camera pans across the faces of the cast again. They are chatting animatedly. Lyons and Sedgwick stand together on the

back of the sofa, then lose their balance and jump off. The record ends, and Sedgwick, who sees Ondine and Dean speaking earnestly to one another, says, “Will you talk so I can hear, Dorothy? I’m being paranoid.” Loeb is involved in reciting a lengthy definition of “genius” as Ondine leans over to give him some amphetamine to snort. Somebody asks Sedgwick, “You mean the new dimension is going to be miserable?” Sedgwick replies with a neologism: “mishappy, unhappy in a different way.”

The camera, or Warhol, who is controlling it off screen, is having a problem keeping the frenetic conversations organized. He says, “oh come on talk one at a time...one at a time.” The conversants fall silent. Sedgwick says, “Ondine and I are going to sleep.” She lies on the floor and says, “We’re taking naps,” and begins to laugh. Ondine has been lying across the back of the sofa for several minutes. Dean, who has not moved from her original spot, now has a strand of beads draped over her head, and Loeb sits on the other end of the sofa. Lyons has taken a spot out of the frame. The reel ends as the conversations continue, none of them discernable as dominant over the others. When the third reel begins, the energy that was visible in the cast during the second reel is obviously waning. Although they continue to talk to one another, their overall tone is far from enthusiastic. Eventually Ondine calls his friend, the drug dealer Rotten Rita, on the phone because he says he is bored by the conversations, and he spends much of the reel on the phone with Rita or talking about how he needs to leave because Rita is in trouble, being “strongarmed for marijuana.” As Ondine becomes more restless, Lyons begins singing a song (“a man without a woman is like a ship without a sail, is like a boat without a rudder, like a kite without a tail...”) which apparently sends Ondine over the

edge. “Shut the fuck up!” he yells, and throws a pillow at him. He then stands up, screams at Loeb, then grabs him and begins hitting him. Sedgwick becomes visibly shaken by this assault, and begins screaming herself. Ondine quickly calms down and apologizes to Loeb, and everyone’s conversations continue. Just before the reel ends, Ondine announces that he must leave, but before he does, he approaches Dean with his vial of drugs and says, “I’ll give you a dosage.” The reel runs out, and the film ends as he is explaining to her how to measure out the drugs.

In terms of how *Afternoon* fits into the landscape of Warhol’s mid-1960s filmic output, there are many things that the film fails to do. With the possible exception of Ondine’s tantrum in reel three, the film does not manage to achieve the moments of brilliance that many Warhol films of the time do—the seemingly spontaneous, totally dramatic instances in which the superstars achieve that paradoxical Warholian state of acting as their real selves. The film is not self-conscious in an overly theatrical way. It contains no real sparks of witty dialogue; Ondine’s declaration about Maria Callas is not his most striking work, and Edie’s ruminative monologues were captured much more effectively in *Outer and Inner Space* (1965). Especially in the second reel, the simultaneous dialogues even begin to frustrate the director. Ultimately and most likely deliberately, Warhol did not have enough foresight or control over the situation to allow the best performances to come to the fore. The camera work itself stagnates in that mediocre zone between absolutely static and schizophrenic. And in terms of failure,

perhaps most profoundly, the film was not used as it was intended—as part of *The Chelsea Girls* (1966)—although the exact reasons for its omission remain unknown.¹²⁷

Whatever the reason, *Afternoon* remains as a useful contrast to what are probably the most famous instances in Warhol's cinema that deal with amphetamine use—two scenes from *The Chelsea Girls*. One is the famous “Pope Ondine” reel, in which Ondine shoots amphetamine into his hand after fixing a needle from works that he pulls out of a paper bag. He then proceeds to excoriate a girl named Ronna Page during a staged confession in which Ondine acts as Pope. The scene climaxes as Page refuses to play along and calls Ondine a phony. Ondine exclaims, “Who are you, Little Miss Wonder? You’re a bore, my dear. A bore!” and slaps her repeatedly in the face. The other blatantly amphetamine-centric reel in *The Chelsea Girls* features Brigid Berlin, also known as Brigid Polk for her tendency to take a “poke” of amphetamine anywhere, administering an injection to Ingrid Superstar’s rear end. She then injects herself, poking the needle straight through her jeans. She and Ingrid chat for a little while; this is the scene that

¹²⁷ Conversation with Greg Pierce, film curator at the Andy Warhol Museum, 18 March 2011. According to Pierce, it is likely that *Afternoon* was included in early incarnations of the *The Chelsea Girls*, but was later omitted, though the reasons remain unknown. Andrew Sarris, in a 1966 *Village Voice* article, notes that the early reel sequences and perhaps even the inclusion or exclusion of particular reels may have been common during early screenings of the film. He also notes that a recent screening of *The Chelsea Girls* seemed shorter than an earlier one he had seen (Andrew Sarris, “Films,” *The Village Voice* (15 December 1966). 33). Steven Watson claims that these films were meant to be a part of a series of films chronicling the life of Edie Sedgwick. *Afternoon* was meant to document her mid-day activities, as *Poor Little Rich Girl* was supposed to represent the morning, and *Restaurant* the evening (Steven Watson, *Factory Made: Warhol and the Sixties* [New York: Pantheon Books, 2003], 215). The source of Watson’s account is probably Callie Angell’s essay “Andy Warhol, Filmmaker,” in *The Andy Warhol Museum* (Pittsburgh: The Andy Warhol Museum, 1994), 132. In my same conversation with Pierce, he confirms that this could have been the case, and also said that the film *Face* was probably also intended for the same purpose. This line-up of films never materialized in any exhibition format. A retrospective of Edie Sedgwick films was supposed to screen at the Filmmakers Cinematheque in Spring 1966, but by this time Andy and Edie were estranged, and the cancellation of this program led to one of the first public performances of what would later become Warhol’s Exploding Plastic Inevitable.

caused Bosley Crowther and other reviewers of the film to refer to Berlin as a lesbian.¹²⁸

Crowther's inference is probably due in part to Berlin's line, "Susan Bottomly I would like to have," and another part of the conversation with Ingrid in which they discuss Berlin's love for Rotten Rita—the same Rita whom Ondine had been worried about in *Afternoon* and who was actually a man, and one of the most prominent of the Mole People, a band of amphetamine heads whose group often overlapped with Warhol's Factory crowd. After Ingrid leaves the room, Berlin begins to brag that she has just given Ingrid an overdose—Ingrid had wanted something to calm her down but instead Berlin has injected her with so much speed that she will be up for weeks. Berlin's confession dissolves into a smug cackle.

The rest of Berlin's reel features her on the phone, mostly discussing drugs. She answers the phone and discusses the wares she has for sale—speed that is "crystal clear like snow on the windowpane"—and the merits or downfalls of various pharmaceuticals. The opioid pharmaceutical Darvon, she explains, is nothing more than glorified Excedrin. She doesn't dig morphine; she likes people who are "up there," which in this context is tantamount to people who are on speed. Ondine and Berlin were probably in the mid-1960s the most extraverted and "up there" of the Warhol Factory crew. Their aggressive use of amphetamine in *The Chelsea Girls* is representative of the most extreme cases of onscreen drug use in Warhol's cinematic corpus.¹²⁹ In general, Ondine's and Berlin's use

¹²⁸ Bosley Crowther, "The Underground Overflows," *New York Times* (11 December 1966), D3.

¹²⁹ In addition to the visible amphetamine use in *Afternoon* and *Chelsea Girls*, Warhol's 1969 film *Imitation of Christ* also features blatant use of speed, when Ondine, who is in bed with Brigid, prepares a shot for Brigid—her "morning poke" he calls it—with a needle and spoon, and then administers the shot into her ass.

of amphetamine was relentless, and it helped to define their personas both on and off screen. This is not to say that they were nothing without their drugs; their personalities were witty and bombastic with or without them. But, as *Afternoon* reflects, the effects of the drugs are not insignificant. Although *Afternoon* does not possess scenes that are as dramatic in their portrayal of drug use as the Brigid and Ondine reels in *The Chelsea Girls*, it provides a snapshot of the effects of amphetamine on performers' behavior, because, over time, we are able to see the stars both before and after they take the drugs.

The second reel of *Afternoon* contains actions that exemplify several effects of amphetamines that I will return to throughout my discussion of the drug's relationship to Warhol's artistic production in the 1960s. As with any drug experience, the way a drug affects behavior is to a certain extent subjective; the personality of the user—as well as various biological predispositions, hormonal and otherwise—ultimately determine his or her reaction to the drug. Nevertheless, there is a marked contrast in the behavior of the actors in *Afternoon* from the first to the second reel, as my above description reflects. As soon as the actors take the amphetamine—which is absorbed into the bloodstream within minutes of its ingestion—the psychological and physiological effects of the drug become visible. The atmosphere of the room changes from casual and wistful to fragmented and energized. Edie declares that she feels paranoid; Ondine declares that Maria Callas is God. Dorothy Dean, who had been reserved and mute in the first reel, becomes animated and playful in the second. Sedgwick also expresses, sometimes jokingly, feelings of unhappiness (being mishappy) and sleeplessness (as when she says almost sarcastically that she and Ondine are going to take naps, though anyone familiar with the effects of the

drug would know that this is nearly impossible). Both Ondine and Loeb exhibit hyperbolic tendencies when they expound upon ideas about “genius” or brilliance. Accounts of feelings of high energy, overblown proclamations of euphoria and a sort of background buzz of anxiety, recur in histories of the development of amphetamine as a “wonder drug” of the twentieth century. Likewise, Sedgwick’s speech about speed not only alludes to amphetamine’s common name “speed,” but also to a popular marketing strategy for the drug—the idea that the world is changing and moving so quickly that people need artificial stimulants to keep up. All of the behaviors I have just described are associated with the effects of amphetamine and contribute to a structure of daily life that dictates much of Warhol’s artistic output during this time, especially his cinema and multimedia production the Exploding Plastic Inevitable.

Although the amount of the dosage, as well as the method by which it is administered—sniffed, ingested by mouth, injected under the skin, or mainlined into a vein—leads to a sort of stratification of the intensity of the effects of the drug, amphetamine causes specific effects in the brain of the user. Basically, it affects the transmission of chemical messages in the brain from one neuron to another. Hormones called neurotransmitters are the actual carriers of these messages. For example, the neurotransmitter dopamine “regulates feelings of reward, motor coordination, motivation, and hormonal release.”¹³⁰ Basically, at least in the case of dopamine, outside stimuli cause the brain to activate certain neurotransmitters so people can become motivated to

¹³⁰ Errol Yudko, Harold V. Hall and Sandra B. McPherson, *Methamphetamine Use: Clinical and Forensic Aspects* (New York: CRC Press, 2003), 39.

complete tasks, or to feel a sense of accomplishment after completing a task. The neurotransmitter is the medium that carries these impulses from one neuron to another; they in essence create those feelings. Just as communication between neurons causes the brain to connect outside stimuli with resultant feelings about the stimuli, the cessation of such feelings also depends upon the neurons' regulation of the amount of neurotransmitters that are released and absorbed. Receptor neurons sometimes contain enzymes that break down the neurotransmitter after an appropriate amount has been absorbed. Alternatively, some receptors in effect reverse the trajectory of the neurotransmitter, thus sending it back across the synapse (the passageway between neurons along which the neurotransmitter travels) to its point of synthesis in the original neuron. This latter process is called "reuptake."¹³¹

Amphetamines basically inhibit neurons either from releasing those enzymes that break down the hormones in the neurotransmitters, or they prevent reuptake from taking place. The result of either action is that the synapses become flooded with neurotransmitters that continue to release hormones into the brain. The neurotransmitters that are most affected by amphetamine belong to a category known as monoamines, and include norepinephrine, serotonin, and dopamine. All of these chemicals, in various ways, generally affect mood. Both dopamine and norepinephrine affect feelings of

¹³¹ Yudko, Hall and McPherson, *Methamphetamine Use*, 37–38.

reward, and the latter controls the fight-or-flight response in the sympathetic nervous system. Serotonin contributes to feelings of well-being.¹³²

When amphetamine was first discovered in 1929 by the American chemist Gordon Alles and throughout the 1930s, as the effects of the drug were researched extensively to determine the best use and marketing strategy for the drug, the exact chemical process by which these neurotransmitters were affected was not yet fully known or understood.¹³³ Even so, one of the first things Alles noted when testing the drug on himself in June 1929 was a “feeling of well being.”¹³⁴ This feeling was not in itself enough to catapult the drug into a marketable niche in the pharmaceutical industry, however. In the early days of its testing, Smith Kline and French, the drug company that held the patent for Benzedrine, marketed amphetamine (first the Benzedrine Inhaler and later Benzedrine Sulfate tablets) as an antihistamine and blood-pressure stimulant. During World War II, Benzedrine was issued to German, British, and American soldiers to keep them awake during long missions under exhausting conditions. Though military tests on the drug concluded that no physiological advantage could be gained by the use of amphetamine—its objective results on increased alertness or staving off exhaustion were essentially the same as caffeine—its results as a booster of morale, or for helping soldiers engage in boring, repetitive or monotonous tasks with sustained interest gave

¹³² Nicholas Rasmussen, *On Speed: The Many Lives of Amphetamine* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 38.

¹³³ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 38.

¹³⁴ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 6.

amphetamine an edge.¹³⁵ In the 1950s, as ideas about depression and psychotherapy were on the rise, certain brands of amphetamines were marketed as the first antidepressant in the U.S. By the 1960s, as other antidepressants were being promoted by drug companies, amphetamine gained currency as a diet pill or general mood elevator for people who were not necessarily clinically depressed, but simply needed a pick-me-up to get them through a dull work week.¹³⁶ One such diet pill, the methamphetamine-based Obetrol, was the brand that Warhol was prescribed from the early 1960s until his death in 1987.¹³⁷

These, of course, are the recommended uses of amphetamine throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Reports of abuse of the drug existed as early as 1936, after student subjects of psychological studies at the University of Minnesota discovered that Benzedrine could aid in all-night study sessions, and they spread the word about the new drug across campus. Campus medical staff reported a pattern of students collapsing from exhaustion or reporting chronic insomnia due to abuse of the drugs.¹³⁸ In the 1950s, the New York beat culture swore by amphetamines; Jack Kerouac and Allan Ginsberg believed that the drug enhanced creativity, and William Burroughs became notorious for his antics involving Benzedrine inhalers and target practice with his pistol. Violent acts,

¹³⁵ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 73–85.

¹³⁶ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 161–162.

¹³⁷ There are slight differences between the chemical variants of amphetamine, dextroamphetamine and methamphetamine. Dextroamphetamine tends to increase feelings of well-being while most side-effects such as edginess or crankiness are less pronounced. Methamphetamine is a bit stronger and more intense than amphetamine, and as such was usually prescribed in smaller dosages. (Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 51–52.

¹³⁸ Lester Grinspoon and Peter Hedblom, *The Speed Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 12–13. Students who had been subjects of amphetamine testing apparently spread the word across campus about the usefulness of the drug to help with all-night study sessions. For another account of the University of Minnesota reports, see Leslie Iversen, *Speed, Ecstasy, Ritalin: The Science of Amphetamines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 90.

paranoid behavior, and psychotic episodes litter the literature on amphetamine abuse in the United States and Britain.

By the 1960s, amphetamine use was widespread and common. According to one report, in the mid-1960s about 8 billion standard dosage (5–15 mg) amphetamines were being produced in the United States every year.¹³⁹ I mean this speculative figure to give a rough idea of the proliferation of the drug, since drug companies were not obligated to share details about the quantity of drugs they manufactured. This figure also does not reflect the amount of homemade or black-market amphetamines that were also widely available at this time. Basically, amphetamines permeated many different classes of urban and suburban society, and each niche market had its own uses for the drug. In a 1967 article in *The Village Voice*, the writer Don McNeill identifies amphetamine use as “a well-kept secret in the Underground,” but also points to the drug’s presence outside hippie drug culture:

In the last decade, amphetamine has been conveniently and quietly accepted by the American culture. It is a drug tailored to the temptations of the times. For the executive and for those striving to succeed him, for anyone overcome with delinquent demands, it is an elixir of energy, a solution to the deadline dilemma, an antidote for drudgery. It offers a seductive illusion of brilliance and an abundant supply of enthusiasm.¹⁴⁰

The drug is a tool to help an upwardly mobile class of people get ahead in the marketplace; the feelings produced by the drug have a commerce-oriented goal, and as such amphetamines provide a clear advantage and thus serve a purpose that is appealing

¹³⁹ Grinspoon and Hedblom, *The Speed Culture*, 20. This figure is based on an estimate that is “less than ten years” after a 1958 report that about 3.5 billion tablets were being produced.

¹⁴⁰ Don McNeill, “The A-Heads: An Amphetamine Apple in Psychedelic Eden.” *The Village Voice* 12, no. 16 (February 2, 1967): 11.

to what McNeill identifies as the “Establishment.” He then goes on to explain how the Establishment and Underground each have different attitudes toward the drug, but he also recognizes certain commonalities between these seemingly polarized communities:

The use of amphetamine...within the Establishment is discreet...There is no need for the suburban amphetamine consumer to be concerned about Federal and state laws prohibiting its illicit use. He regards his own use as legitimate, notarized by his doctor’s prescription...He would regard as slanderous any suggestion that he had a great deal in common with “dope fiends.”...

Amphetamine, therefore, crosses party lines. The housewife who takes gradually increasing doses of amphetamine each morning to “wake up” is closer than she cares to believe to the A-head who concedes that he shoots the same drug to “get high.”¹⁴¹

This inadvertent overlap between the habits of the Establishment and the habits of the Underground is something that McNeill identifies as “hypocrisy” on the part of the Establishment. The suburban user is in denial of his or her status as a drug addict, while at least the Underground users, though they use the drug only to achieve a feeling of being high and not for social or commercial advancement, have accepted their identities, and because of this have actually formed “a mutually reinforcing sub-society”—an “A-head community” that ironically, considering that they are “the prey of the FDA, probably has a better understanding of the drug than its suburban counterpart.”¹⁴²

The community that McNeill describes is not one united by any particular ideology or political ideal. Rather, the need for a steady supply of drugs, education in the tricks of the trade such as learning how to shoot up, “how to eat without hunger, how to

¹⁴¹ McNeill, “The A-Heads,” 11.

¹⁴² McNeill, “The A-Heads,” 11; McNeill uses the term “A-head community” on p. 31.

rest without sleep,”¹⁴³ unites its members. Another common characteristic is the communal living arrangements that take place—dozens of people in one loft is not uncommon, and its inhabitants stay awake for days on end, tinkering with mechanical projects or cleaning sections of the apartment obsessively, while ignoring other areas or their own personal hygiene. Basically, according to McNeill the common ground that unites the amphetamine communities is a mutual empathy toward the misery and physical degeneration that takes place amongst its members. In the most extreme cases, eventually the drug addicts will die, captivated by the drug and unable to escape from the downward spiral of habituated use. As McNeill explains, “Ironically, most A-heads seem to be aware of the decay-destruction possibilities of the drug, but are not inhibited by the danger. Such is the amphetamine seduction.”¹⁴⁴

It is possible to graft the entire spectrum of amphetamine use and abuse outlined by McNeill and others onto the community whose main locus was Andy Warhol’s Factory. Many of its participants, including Berlin, Ondine, and Billy Name were also involved in the more overt and hardcore amphetamine communities that populated downtown New York in the early and mid-1960s, including the Amphetamine Rapture Group and the Mole People. Indeed, *Afternoon* and *The Chelsea Girls* illustrates quite clearly the progression in the intensity of amphetamine abuse that McNeill outlines in his article—the early onset of oral ingestion of the drug and its immediate effects of talkativeness and euphoric enthusiasm in *Afternoon*, and the more severe and sinister

¹⁴³ McNeill, “The A-Heads,” 31.

¹⁴⁴ McNeill, “The A-Heads,” 31.

effects of the long-term commitment to injecting the drug as seen in *The Chelsea Girls*. Even Warhol's identification of himself as a "business artist" for whom "making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art" becomes a parody of the Establishment amphetamine user in light of McNeill's characterization. Indeed, in the copious scholarship that exists on Warhol, the ubiquity of drugs in the Factory is a given, as is Warhol's use of small doses of amphetamine (though accounts vary as some sources report that he often stayed up for days on his Obetrols). Writers in almost every extended discussion of Warhol's studio practice mention amphetamine at least in passing. Yet in many ways the drug is everywhere and nowhere in the Warhol literature. Though it permeated multiple facets of Warhol's production at this time, discussions of amphetamine rarely occur beyond a mention of its use—there is the obligatory acknowledgment that many of the Factory members habitually used amphetamines, but there is little discussion of their central role in Warhol's artworks.¹⁴⁵ Usually, amphetamines occupy a space of performance; they are the accoutrements of the superstars, part of their degenerate or underground aura, appreciated, but hardly ever understood as the tools of their creativity or artistic production. A few exceptions exist—for example, Brigid Berlin in the mid-1960s engaged in prolonged and compulsive drawing in her "Trip Books," to which other artists and friends also contributed. Also, the silver Factory's trademark appearance—the aluminum foil and paint that covered every

¹⁴⁵ To my knowledge, two short studies of the relationship of amphetamines to the Factory do exist: Juan Suárez, "Revisando el archivo queer: Warhol, anfetamina, ruido, velocidad," unpublished paper, delivered at the symposium "Sujetos Visibles / Historias visuales," organized by Beatriz Preciado, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona (MACBA), May 9, 2009; and Michael Angelo Tata, "Andy Warhol: When Junkies Ruled the World," *Nebula* 2, no. 2 (June 2005): 76–112.

surface in the loft—was a reenactment of Billy Name’s repetitive and compulsive covering of his own apartment in foil. Warhol was so impressed with Name’s endeavor that he requested the same be done to his workspace.¹⁴⁶ Such stereotyped behavior like obsessive tinkering, as well as the preoccupation with mechanical or shiny objects, is a documented symptom of prolonged or high-dosage amphetamine use.¹⁴⁷ The repetitive, compulsive arranging or shining of objects is known as “punding,” and it has been associated with amphetamine use since early studies of the drug began.¹⁴⁸

The poet Gerard Malanga, Warhol’s assistant and collaborator throughout the 1960s, has acknowledged that amphetamine played a vital role in the conception of Warhol’s films: “I don’t think any of those films we made during that time would have been possible without drugs... The thing that was synonymous with Andy’s films and amphetamine was the sense of repetition and the constant stretching of time, which was very amphetamine-like.”¹⁴⁹ Many of Warhol’s earliest silent films are investigations into the passage of time. The slow motion caused by those films’ silent speed projection automatically precludes the temporality in the film from being analogous to real time, and also increases the films’ actual, and likely their perceived, length. The films of especially long duration, most notably the 5 ½-hour *Sleep* (1963) and the 8-hour *Empire* (1964), exist in their copious reels of film as tactile challenges to the patience of the viewer. In

¹⁴⁶ Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1980), 64–65.

¹⁴⁷ See A. Randrup and I. Munkvad, “Correlation Between Specific Effects of Amphetamines on the Brain and Behavior,” in *Current Concepts on Amphetamine Abuse*, ed. Everett H. Ellinwood (Rockville, MD: National Institute of Mental Health, 1972), 17–25; Grinspoon and Hedblom, *The Speed Culture*, 103–106.

¹⁴⁸ Grinspoon and Hedblom, *The Speed Culture*, 103.

¹⁴⁹ Martin Torgoff, *Can’t Find My Way Home: America in the Great Stoned Age, 1945–2000* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 166.

actuality, there was no prescribed viewing method for these films. When *Sleep* was projected in public, often a pop music radio soundtrack accompanied the screening, and viewers were free to get up and walk around, to enter the theater late or leave early, or to sit and meditate on the images before them.¹⁵⁰ It is also possible that nobody sat through *Empire* from beginning to end. Jonas Mekas recounted in *The Village Voice* that during the premier of *Empire* at the Filmmakers Cinematheque, a mob of 30 or 40 angry audience members threatened to destroy the movie theater if they did not receive refunds.¹⁵¹ As Callie Angell discovered during her attentive screening of *Empire* after its 1994 restoration, the obvious reflection of Warhol in the window of the Time-Life Building appears in the seventh reel. Since Angell, three decades after its first screenings, was the first person to mention Warhol's inadvertent cameo, it stands to reason that she was the first person (or at least the first person who planned on writing about it) to watch the film in its entirety.¹⁵²

Parker Tyler, in his 1967 article "Dragtime and Drugtime, or Film à la Warhol," was one of the earliest critics to notice and expound upon the connection between Warhol's films and a drug experience. Tyler suggests that the ability of Warhol's monotonous subject matter to hold his audiences in rapture is similar to the tendency of the marijuana user to find interest in mundane events: "A cat would cross the room; that

¹⁵⁰ Tom Gunning, David Schwartz, and Flo Jacobs, "Interview with Ken Jacobs" (10 and 11 August, 1989), typescript of interview, reprinted in *Films That Tell Time: A Ken Jacobs Retrospective* (New York: American Museum of the Moving Image, 1989).

¹⁵¹ Jonas Mekas, "The Premiere of *Empire*" (11 March 1965), in *Movie Journal: The Rise of a New American Cinema, 1959–1971* (New York: Collier Books, 1972), 180–181.

¹⁵² Callie Angell, "Empire," in *Andy Warhol: Motion Pictures*, ed. Klaus Biesenbach (Berlin: KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 2004), 31.

was all.”¹⁵³ To consider the impact of amphetamine use on the attention of viewers is to supplement Tyler’s argument; with amphetamine, watching the film at all may become beside the point. Speed often causes the user to experience time as speeded up; hours pass by in what seem like minutes.¹⁵⁴ So while these films of long duration may have seemed tedious or even infuriating to moviegoers who attempted watch the whole movie, or rapturous to people who, as Tyler points out, made a conscious choice to open themselves up to the hypnotic potential of the duration of the film itself, the film and its exhibition also provided a pretext for socializing or for talking—the latter being another favorite activity of the amphetamine user. For anybody actually on amphetamines during a screening of *Sleep* or *Empire*, the length of the film likely would not have seemed so excessive. Furthermore, the production of these films—the setting up of the camera, as well as standing around as the camera ran and changing out the reels of film, was probably not a particularly daunting task for Warhol or his crew. Especially in the case of *Empire*, with its inanimate subject and its absence of post-production editing, it is possible to interpret the making of this film, and its length, as a record of being up all night.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Parker Tyler. “Dragtime and Drugtime, or Film à la Warhol,” *Evergreen Review* 11, no. 46 (1967): 30.

¹⁵⁴ Grinspoon and Hedblom, *The Speed Culture*, 107.

¹⁵⁵ *Sleep* was the first film that Warhol edited extensively. After he was finished, he supposedly declared that post-production editing was too difficult and he vowed never to do it again, so to think of *Sleep* in terms of one extended filmmaking session, which it certainly was not since the filming took place over multiple weeks, is not feasible at all. (Callie Angell, “Sleep,” in *The Films of Andy Warhol: Part II* [New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994], 11.) Warhol actually did include cuts in a number of his later films, including *My Hustler* (1965), although until 1967, when he began to experiment with the strobe cut, the post-production cuts tended still to preserve long takes, sometimes appearing only once or twice in a single film.

The long duration of films like *Sleep* and *Empire* represent Warhol's experiments with distorting or exaggerating the passage of time, and reflect how amphetamine, as one strategy for making long duration seem not so long, played a role in shaping Warhol and his collaborators' conception of time. Drugtime, in this sense, actually extends past the finished object—the film—and into the ephemeral experience of making and even viewing the film. For Warhol and his Factory, drugtime was an alternative temporal plane—one not dictated by a typical nine-to-five workday, or by normative sleep habits—and this alternative temporality is evident in the conception and execution of *Empire* as well as the well-documented presence of amphetamine in Warhol's Factory throughout the 1960s. Looking back, Warhol acknowledges the central role of amphetamine in shaping his daily life:

I could never finally figure out if more things happened in the sixties because there was more awake time for them to happen in (since so many people were on amphetamine), or if people started taking amphetamine because there were so many things to do that they needed to have more awake time to do them in. It was probably both. I was taking only the small amount of Obetrol for weight loss that my doctor prescribed, but even that much was enough to give you that wired, happy go-go-go feeling in your stomach that made you want to work-work-work, so I could just imagine how incredibly high people who took the straight stuff felt. I only slept two or three hours a night from '65 through '67, but I used to see people who hadn't slept for days at a time and they'd say things like "I'm hitting my ninth day and it's glorious!"...Seeing everybody so up all the time made me think that sleep was becoming pretty obsolete, so I decided I'd better quickly do a movie of a person sleeping.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Warhol and Hackett *POPism*, 33. One account of Warhol himself staying up all night on amphetamines occurs in the early pages of *a: a Novel*, during an exchange between D (Drella, or Warhol) and O (Ondine). In some instances in the following transcription, which is taken directly from the novel, a switch in speaker is indicated by a hanging indent, and sometimes it is signified by a "D" or "O," as if in a script:

O: ...I figured that you wouldn't be up by eleven, that's why I didn't call.
No, I uh, I took all these ObErtrols [sic] yesterday, and I was up all night.
What'd you do?
(D) Huh?

The general proliferation in New York of amphetamines that Warhol describes here extends to the microcosm of the Factory, where amphetamine was ubiquitous due to the frequent presence of devout users. Many of Warhol's cohorts during this period were committed to living according to a non-normative metric of time, outside of conventional temporal structures, including not just deviance from a daytime schedule and regular patterns of sleeping and waking, but also from the normally-assumed life trajectory of childhood, adolescence, maturation, procreation, then death. As Mary Woronov said of Ondine's eventual death, "his body just eventually gave out on him. But then he never had any intention of surviving, did he?"¹⁵⁷

Living according to an alternative temporality, in this case the drugtime informed by heavy amphetamine use, can provide the means for radical artistic practice—for a creativity that is decidedly non-future-directed.¹⁵⁸ In addition to encouraging the user to practice an otherwise impossible schedule of sleeplessness, that time in which the user is awake, as Warhol's account of speaking to a speed freak suggests, is often spent feeling

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- (O) What'd you do?
 - (D) Just read magazines.
 - (O) Oh and you can't get a...How can you, I can't get interested enough to read them.
 - (D) Really?
 - (O) Positively anything, I get, I'm starting—

That's why I read the same one over and over again.

(Andy Warhol, *a: a Novel* [New York: Grove Press, 1968], 8.) Victor Bockris describes Warhol's habit of taking amphetamines to stay up to go to parties, and how Warhol and John Giorno would often stay up late at night talking: "Giorno would watch Andy breaking open capsules and licking the tiny pills off his fingers. Soon, it would be nothing special for him on being offered a cocktail or a plate of food to say 'No thanks!' and pop a pill in his mouth instead, chasing it with a glass of soda." (Victor Bockris, *Warhol* [New York: Da Capo Press, 1997], 175.)

¹⁵⁷ Torgoff, *Can't Find My Way Home*, 173.

¹⁵⁸ See my Introduction for a discussion of how my conception of this alternative temporality relates to the recent scholarly literature on queer temporality, and why I have decided not to identify the temporality I am discussing here as exclusively queer.

euphoric or superhuman—such are the effects of high dosages of amphetamine. Both Ondine’s outburst and Brigid’s mirthful monologue in *The Chelsea Girls* are vivid examples of theatrical personalities that have been catapulted to new dramatic heights by the aid of injecting amphetamine.

These intense performances by Ondine and Brigid are emblematic of a particular aspect of the artistic sensibility that Warhol cultivated by showcasing superstars who are entrenched in the time and space of the speed freak. Often the aspects of amphetamine that seem so attractive to the user appear unappealing, self-destructive, cruel, or foolish to outside observers (this is not to say that the behaviors did not appear this way to the users themselves, an idea that I will discuss below). Indeed, several drug-related deaths occurred in Warhol’s crowd in the 1960s.¹⁵⁹ Warhol’s reaction to the death of Freddy Herko provides insight into Warhol’s broader attitude toward the hazards of amphetamine, which are linked to Warhol’s own self-claimed fascination with death, a theme that permeates his paintings and films in the 1960s.¹⁶⁰ Herko was a gifted dancer who studied at the American Ballet Theater as a teenager and became renowned in the New York avant-garde dance scene. He participated with the Judson Dance Theater in the early 1960s, often performing his own choreography. Warhol, who admitted that he was

¹⁵⁹ In addition to Herko: Andrea Feldman, Danny Williams, Edie Sedgwick, later Eric Emerson, and possibly Ingrid Superstar. However, with the exception of Feldman, who committed suicide, these deaths occurred mysteriously or accidentally, and none of them happened in the vicinity of Warhol or his Factory. Sedgwick’s barbiturate overdose actually occurred years after she and Warhol had split, when she was living in California. (George Plimpton and Jean Stein, *Edie: An American Biography* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982], 419–420.

¹⁶⁰ For more on Warhol’s interest in death see Bockris, *Andy Warhol*, 169–172; Hal Foster, “Death in America,” in *Andy Warhol*, ed. Annette Michelson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 79; and Warhol’s own statement, in reference to his “Death in America,” or Death and Disaster series, “I realized everything I was doing must have been Death,” in G. R. [Gene] Swenson, “What is Pop Art? Part I,” *ARTnews* 62, no. 70 (November 1963): 60.

“absolutely fascinated” with Herko, featured the dancer in several of his early films, including *Kiss*, *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys*, and three versions of *Haircut*.¹⁶¹ Herko became heavily involved with the downtown amphetamine world. Warhol, who described Freddy as “brilliant but not disciplined—the exact type of person I would become involved with over and over and over again during the sixties,” recalls how speed inhibited Freddy’s ability to complete a dance project:

He had the classic symptom [of chronic amphetamine use]: intense concentration *but!* only on minutiae. That’s what happens to you on speed—your teeth might be falling out of your head, the landlord might be evicting you, your brother might be dropping dead right next to you, *but!* you would have to, say, get your address book recopied and you couldn’t let any of that other stuff “distract” you. And that’s what happened to Freddy—instead of concentrating on the main idea of his dance pieces, he’d get all involved with fixing an arrangement of feathers or mirrors or beads on a costume, and he was never able to see his choreography jobs through to the finish.¹⁶²

On October 27, 1964, Herko, who was physically and mentally incapacitated due to his drug addiction, committed suicide in a highly theatrical manner when he literally danced out the window of his friend Johnny Dodd’s Cornelia Street apartment during the “Sanctus” portion of Mozart’s Coronation Mass in C, which was playing on the record player. According to Steven Watson, Dodd, who witnessed the leap, characterized the suicide as inevitable: “it was obvious that Freddie had to do it now: the time and the place were right, the decor was right, the music was right.”¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 55; Callie Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné, Volume 1* (New York: Abrams, 2006), 93.

¹⁶² Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 57.

¹⁶³ Watson, *Factory Made*, 172. Other accounts of Herko’s death are in Angell, *Screen Tests*, 93; Bockris, *Andy Warhol*, 208–209; Torgoff, *Can’t Find My Way Home*, 167–168, and Warhol, *POPism*, 85. These accounts all vary slightly in details such as who was present, who put on the record (most say Freddy put it on; Watson claims Dodd did), and what Freddy did in the moments leading up to the jump. Bockris and

Not long after Herko's suicide, it became common knowledge throughout the various social circles in downtown New York that Warhol, upon hearing the news, had said that he wished he had known that Freddy was going to jump, because he would have liked to film it. Reactions to Warhol's statement were understandably harsh; Warhol's detractors used it to buttress their own arguments that Warhol was devoid of emotional depth or empathy. Warhol's Factory had by this time, 1964, become a locus for what many people saw as a den of iniquity—a breeding ground for competition and backbiting among Warhol's acolytes, who were all vying for a place of privilege. Even Factory initiates acknowledged that Warhol was supremely manipulative, a sort of vulture whose edginess and cold detachment were somehow magnetic and drew people to seek his approval.¹⁶⁴ Warhol's nickname, Drella, a combination of Dracula and Cinderella, had been given to him by the Factory regulars, casting him as a sort of fairy tale villain; it was used as a term of endearment by Ondine and others.¹⁶⁵ Warhol's biographer Victor Bockris likened Warhol's position at the Factory to a school headmaster or a cult leader; Gary Indiana identified him as a father confessor.¹⁶⁶ Henry Geldzahler compared Warhol's presence at the Factory as being akin to "Louis XIV getting up in the morning.

Torgoff say that Herko had taken LSD before he jumped. For more on Freddie Herko, see Jennifer Doyle, "Between Friends," in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*, ed. George Haggerty and Molly McGarry. (Chicester: Wiley, 2008), 330–332, accessed 4 March 2013, <http://utxa.ebib.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=350877>; and José Esteban Muñoz, "A Jeté Out the Window: Fred Herko's Incandescent Illumination," in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 147–168.

¹⁶⁴ Bockris, *Warhol*, 202–215.

¹⁶⁵ Bockris, *Warhol*, 200. Ondine, Sedgwick, and Dean all refer to Drella repeatedly, in a joking manner, throughout *Afternoon*.

¹⁶⁶ Bockris, *Warhol*, 206.

The big question was whom will Andy pay attention to.” Emile de Antonio said that he was “like the Marquis de Sade”:

...his very presence acted as a kind of release for people so they could live out their fantasies, get undressed, or in some cases do very violent things to get Andy to watch them. He was able to bring that out in a lot of people doing weird things in his early films who wouldn’t have done what they were doing for money or D. W. Griffiths or anybody else. He loved to see other people dying. This is what the Factory was about: Andy was the Angel of Death’s Apprentice as these people went through their shabby lives with drugs and weird sex and group sex and mass sex. So Andy looked and Andy as voyeur *par excellence* was the devil, because he got bored just looking.¹⁶⁷

Such characterizations of Warhol and the social hierarchy of the Factory do not negate the fact that Warhol’s remark about Herko’s death was in poor taste, or that it was insensitive. Nor was Herko’s death warranted because he was a drug user and drug users often die young. Nevertheless, the fact remains that for Warhol to have felt that his response was justified, he must have been operating according to a different set of standards than those by which he was judged. Ondine, who defended Warhol’s reaction as “beyond love and hate,” argued that Warhol had basically tapped into Herko’s true intentions for how to live out his life, and how to die: “He [Herko] prepared himself for that moment, and Warhol was there! Warhol was able to get from Herko, and Herko was able to get from Warhol, a sense of completion so that Herko could actually die as he wanted to do all of his life...It was a totality. I don’t know how else to say it: working with Andy Warhol gave one a great sense of completion.”¹⁶⁸ Ronald Tavel’s comments on Warhol’s remark are similarly grand and eschew emotionalism: “The uproar over his

¹⁶⁷ Bockris, *Warhol*, 205.

¹⁶⁸ Bockris, *Warhol*, 209. Watson uses part of this quotation in *Factory Made*, 173.

reaction to Herko's death was sentimental soap-opera bullshit. If you're talking about somebody who can take a position with Samuel Beckett you're talking about something much more serious than crying over somebody's death. This was art."¹⁶⁹ Ondine and Tavel both essentially identify Herko's suicide as a performance—Ondine calls it work; Tavel calls it art. Their defense of Warhol is that he, too, recognized that Herko had intended his suicide to be his last performance.

Although both Ondine's and Tavel's interpretations of Warhol's comments on Herko's death tend toward melodrama, and to a certain extent they seem to want to elevate Warhol's comments into the realm of art as some last-ditch effort to redeem what may ultimately be an irredeemable comment, Herko's suicide is an extreme example of the implication that to live according to an alternative temporality means necessarily to accept or at least to anticipate that a short life is not a wasted life, or that those who make choices to shorten their lives, either through heavy drug use or through suicide, do so at their own risk, and presumably for their own benefits. Warhol saw value in the way Herko died; Warhol saw value in many behaviors or events that to others may have seemed tragic or wasteful. Ultimately, privileging an alternative temporality leads to the upending of many values that normative temporalities prize. In the case of Warhol's Factory in the 1960s, enacting the rejection of such values often coincided with the effects of amphetamine—not simply the positive aspects of the drug, but its adverse effects, including physiological damage and feelings of paranoia and isolation.

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¹⁶⁹ Bockris, *Warhol*, 214.

While less attentive audience members, as well as those who were on speed, might have proved impervious to the prolonged, slow-motion duration of Warhol's silent films because they chose to ignore the film in favor of talking or even leaving the theater, other spectators—especially those who chose to sit and devote their undivided attention to the images on the screen—may have experienced the films as torturous. Indeed, many negative accounts of films such as *Sleep* or even the much shorter *Eat* characterize the films as dragging on interminably and inducing frustration and boredom in viewers, as Mekas' anecdote about the angry mob demanding refunds during the premiere of *Empire* indicates. Apparently during one early screening of *Sleep*, an audience member ran up to the screen during a close-up shot of John Giorno's ear and yelled into it, "Wake up!"¹⁷⁰ Parker Tyler, in his essay "Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Filmmaker?" characterizes this particular tension of spectatorial experience as sadomasochistic:

If the incredibly commonplace (like eight hours of the Empire State Building from dawn to dusk) stamped Warhol's triumphantly bad filmmaking, there was evidence that prolonged and unbroken attention to what everybody can see every day implied a psychological state like that of a voyeur at a peephole. Watching *Eat*, for example, which shows Jasper Johns [sic], Pop artist, eating a mushroom for 45 minutes, the passively consenting spectator who doesn't walk out on it is committed to something meanwhile; the longer he stays, the more committed he feels, and the more challenged, besides, to find on the screen the charm of an event—any event. Should he fail to find it, the failure seems logical; on further thought, it seems inevitable. Warhol's primitive film scene was like a peepshow without the show. Something extravagant, something daring, yes! But something that made "doing" a desert. Hollywood had always said, "Laugh, sucker." Andy changed it to "Suffer, sucker." It was an intuitive appeal to that common,

¹⁷⁰ Television interview with Warhol by BBC, 1965, video transfer screened at the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Fall 2008.

everready domain of human susceptibility: the beautiful badlands of sado-masochism.¹⁷¹

The suffering that Tyler identifies here is a product of feeling trapped—of feeling restless because an excess of mental energy cannot find release in a film that does so little to fulfill a viewer's expectations for stimulation. The trapped viewer, in turn, becomes a willing—even perversely invested—victim of the protracted abuse doled out by Warhol's static camera. He or she may, therefore, experience feelings similar to those of Warhol's own subjects in front of that camera—feelings of withheld gratification, which also happen to mirror those produced by speed. Ondine, in *Afternoon*, finds himself by the third reel ready for the film in the camera to run out so he will be free from his obligation to remain in the same small space. He becomes impatient with and even physically aggressive toward his fellow castmates, and declares, "I can't stand this drain on my emotions!" After his attack on Ronna Page in *The Chelsea Girls*, off-screen voices coax Ondine back onto the set, and for the remainder of the reel he periodically asks how much time remains before he can stop and leave. Of course, in both instances Ondine could theoretically leave at any time. Instead, he voluntarily participates in the very activity that he then claims causes him such misery—he endures. In both films, a potent dose of amphetamine produces a specific combination of effects: a rush of adrenaline, a feeling of restlessness or anxiety, impatience with the people with whom he must

¹⁷¹ Parker Tyler, "Warhol: Horrible or Beautiful Film Maker?" Harry Ransom Center, Parker Tyler Papers, Uncataloged box 2, undated, 4–5. There are two errors in Tyler's descriptions of *Empire* and *Eat*: first, the film actually records a time period from late afternoon until about 3:00 am. And in a more obvious error, the artist in *Eat* is not Jasper Johns, but Robert Indiana.

interact, and somewhat contradictorily, an unswerving compulsion to power through until the end of the film.

Sadomasochistic behavior as well as outright physical abuse are continuous themes in much of Warhol's cinema from the 1960s. In two other reels of *The Chelsea Girls*, Mary Woronov, by her own account high on speed, hog-ties Ingrid Superstar and shoves her underneath a desk, and verbally attacks the young Pepper Davis until she cries.¹⁷² Warhol's 1965 film *Vinyl* takes sadomasochism as its literal subject; the systematic, consensual assault of Gerard Malanga and another actor in the background comprise the main part of the film's action. To be sure, speed is not responsible for every instance of physical aggression that occurs in Warhol's films (there is no evidence of its presence in *Vinyl*, for instance), but the proliferation of verbal and physical altercations, even when not accompanied by obvious amphetamine use, nevertheless replicates the same tension and anxiety produced by the drug. Such negative feelings are inextricable from the euphoria also often felt by users of speed, and it is this paradoxical combination, in addition to explorations of an alternative sense of time, that comprises Warhol's particular amphetamine-inflected sensibility.

Perhaps the most comprehensive manifestation of this sensibility, and of Warhol's own embrace of both the positive and negative feelings associated with it, is his traveling multimedia extravaganza the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, or EPI. The enterprise lasted, from inception to dissolution, for about eleven months in 1966, although its peak frequency of performance occurred on the east coast and in New York in March and

¹⁷² Mary Woronov, *Swimming Underground* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000), 33.

April and during two tours to Los Angeles in May and Chicago later that summer. This flurry of activity was followed by a smattering of shows in the Fall in Provincetown, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Detroit.¹⁷³ The EPI was meant to be a mixed media showcase for The Velvet Underground, who were introduced to Warhol by the filmmaker Barbara Rubin at Café Bizarre in December 1965.¹⁷⁴ Paul Morrissey had suggested a new method of exhibiting Warhol's films alongside lights and music, so they could charge admission and make more money, and during January and February 1966, Warhol was in touch with a disco producer who had an airplane hangar on Long Island for lease and was interested in putting on a show called Andy Warhol's Erupting Plastic Inevitable.¹⁷⁵ This event never materialized, but it was ostensibly for its preparation that the Velvets began practicing in Warhol's Factory very soon after they decided to work with Warhol. Warhol introduced the band to Nico, and they all agreed that the Velvets would write songs for her to sing, though Lou Reed would also sing his own songs and thus the members would avoid becoming simply Nico's back-up band.

The first performance of the Velvet Underground with members of Warhol's entourage—considered in the extant literature to be the proto-version of the EPI—was at an annual banquet for the New York Society for Clinical Psychiatry at Delmonico's on January 13, 1966.¹⁷⁶ Later that month the group performed at the new location of the

¹⁷³ For a timeline of the travels of the EPI, see Johan Kugelberg, ed. *The Velvet Underground: New York Art* (New York: Rizzoli, 2009), 148–151.

¹⁷⁴ Bockris, *Warhol*, 240.

¹⁷⁵ Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 152.

¹⁷⁶ Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 146–47. See also Grace Glueck, "Syndromes Pop at Delmonico's," *New York Times*, 14 January, 1966, 36; and Seymour Krim, "Andy Warhol's 'Velvet Underground' Shock Treatment for Psychiatrists," *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 January 1966.

Filmmakers Cinematheque on 41st Street. Warhol was originally supposed to show an Edie Sedgwick film retrospective, but Sedgwick refused to sign over the rights, so he put on “Andy Warhol UP-Tight,” which featured the films *Vinyl*, *Empire*, and *Eat* as backdrops to the Velvets’ music and interpretive dances performed by Malanga and a few other Factory regulars, which Malanga choreographed to correspond to the Velvets’ song lyrics.

These first two shows were nascent glimpses into what would become large-scale productions that specialized in sensory overload. The Delmonico’s show and the Cinémathèque performance both involved assaults on the audience—notably Rubin and others pointing cameras in the faces of viewers and asking pointed questions, often sexual in nature, such as, “What does her vagina feel like?” and “Is his penis big enough?” and “Do you eat her out? Why are you getting embarrassed? You’re a psychiatrist; you’re not supposed to get embarrassed!”¹⁷⁷ The substantial use of high volume and feedback by the Velvet Underground also created an unnerving effect; Warhol recalls that people walked out of the psychiatrists’ dinner and were very upset. Grace Glueck concluded her article on the show for the *New York Times* with a quotation: “‘You want to do something for mental health?’ asked another psychiatrist. ‘Kill the story.’”¹⁷⁸

In March, Warhol and his crew traveled to two college campuses: Rutgers University in New Jersey and the University of Michigan Film Festival in Ann Arbor. The Rutgers show played for two nights to over 650 people. This marks the first time that

¹⁷⁷ Branden Joseph offers a similar description of this event in his article “‘My Mind Split Open’: Andy Warhol’s Exploding Plastic Inevitable.” *Grey Room* 8 (Summer 2002): 80–107.

¹⁷⁸ Glueck, “Syndromes Pop,” 36.

Warhol's one-time lover and Factory denizen Danny Williams worked the lights for the show. The films used for that show were *Vinyl*, *Lupe*, and a Velvet Underground background reel.¹⁷⁹ At the Michigan show Warhol used a strobe light for the first time. In April, Warhol rented the Dom in the East Village as a venue for the event. The rental of the space occurred because by this time the deal with the airplane hangar had fallen through, and through a chance meeting Morrissey set up a sublease of the Dom space with Rudy Stern and party promoter Jackie Cassen.¹⁸⁰ The space featured a huge dance floor, and Malanga and other Factory hands painted the space white for the projection of films and slides. Shows took place at The Dom almost every night for a month. It was during this time that "Andy Warhol's UP-Tight" developed and crystallized, and changed its name to Exploding Plastic Inevitable.

A typical EPI program lasted about two to three hours. At the Dom, the interior was furnished with tables covered with red checked tablecloths. Coffee, sodas, and salami or bologna sandwiches were available for sale. Audience members arrived and filled seats or stood.¹⁸¹ First, before the band and dancers took to the stage, films would be projected—both reels of *Vinyl* at once, for example. *Eat*, *Hedy*, *Camp* and *Beauty #2* seem to have been used as well. Pop records, sometimes from two different turntables, would play along with perhaps one or both of the soundtracks coming through, so that at

¹⁷⁹ Callie Angell, "Background Reels: EPI Background, Screen Test Poems, and Others," *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, 265–266.

¹⁸⁰ Cassen also produced a multimedia show that took over the Dom after the EPI left to go to California. Jonas Mekas discusses this show as a more female-oriented, mystical and emotional show than the EPI in his piece for *The Village Voice*, "On the Plastic Inevitables and the Strobe Light," (26 May 1966) reprinted in Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 242–244.

¹⁸¹ John Wilcock, "A 'High' School of Music and Art," *East Village Other*, 15 April 1966, unpaginated photocopy from Time Capsule 27, Andy Warhol Archives, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

any given time up to three different soundtracks would be audible. Eventually the Velvets would come out and play at top volume. Malanga and others—sometimes Mary Woronov, sometimes Ondine (though he quit or was ousted early on; accounts vary), sometimes Ingrid Superstar—would enact sadomasochistic whip dances, simulate shooting up heroin, or other movements that corresponded to the songs. The films would continue—background reels of Nico’s face as she sang, as well as films such as *Harlot*, *Couch*, *Blow Job*, *Sleep*, and *Empire*. Slide carousels filled with colored slides would rotate and project patterns onto the films. Spotlights with colored gels were also used, as were pistol lights and strobe lights. The strobes were placed near the dancers. Malanga often danced with large flashlights or a long strip of green phosphorescent tape, and the whipping motion he created would have a dramatic reflective effect in the strobes. The Dom was also the first venue where Warhol introduced his vintage mirror ball; he had one that rested on the floor and one that hung from the ceiling. This is often cited as the first use of a mirror ball in a discotheque, or in any public venue since the 1920s.

Although this description is detailed and offers an accurate account of what typically happened during and EPI performance, it might not do much to convey how the EPI resonated in the experiences of the audience members. Reviews of the EPI shows are particularly interesting in that even the positive reviews seem to be so in spite of what seem like negative responses by audience members and performers alike. Jonas Mekas in *The Village Voice*, an unequivocal fan of all things Warhol, declares that “The auditorium, every aspect of it—singers, light throwers, strobe operators, dancers—at all times are screaming with screeching, piercing personality pain. I say pain; it could also be

called desperation.”¹⁸² An article in the *Columbia Daily Spectator*, which concludes with the statement, “But Warhol still has the best entertainment in town,” also includes this description: “In the audience one fellow clutches his girl, who’s going to cry.” The reviewers follow this observation with a description of Woronov’s and Malanga’s whip dancing and the “blank snarls” on their faces, and Malanga’s comment after twenty minutes of continuous feedback from the Velvets: “It’s impossible to like that song.” According to the writers, “Everyone loved it.”¹⁸³

By May the sublease at the Dom had ended and Warhol had an offer to perform for a month in the Los Angeles nightclub The Trip on Sunset Boulevard. Unlike the New York reviewers, Los Angeles critics were less apt to find redeeming qualities in the show. Mass media accounts of the few performances at The Trip were less than stellar. Most reactions were hostile and inferred that Warhol’s show was meant to make people scared to admit that they didn’t like it, lest they be conceived as philistines by their peers:

Afraid of our own faults, we are afraid to condemn the faults of the far out—even when they go nowhere.¹⁸⁴

The problem here is that most people are probably afraid to criticize this—which it really deserves—possibly because they are afraid of being thought of as “un-hip,”—certainly the biggest sin in today’s society.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Jonas Mekas, “On the Plastic Inevitables and the Strobe Light,” 242.

¹⁸³ Mitch Susskind and Leslie Gottesman, “Keep Your Cool: An Exploding World,” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, 27 April, 1966, unpaginated photocopy from Time Capsule –7, Andy Warhol Archives, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

¹⁸⁴ Art Seidenbaum, “Andy Peacpimple Puts a New Complexion on Night Life,” *LA Times Calendar*, 15 May 1966, unpaginated photocopy from Time Capsule –7, Andy Warhol Archives, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

¹⁸⁵ Burton, “Trip Blows One,” *KFWB/Hitline*, 11 May 1966, 2, photocopy from Time Capsule –7, Andy Warhol Archives, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

One audience member pointed out a difference in sensibilities between New York and L.A., claiming that the show is “for the sophisticates and a big city like New York. The kids here don’t get it.”¹⁸⁶ Of the Hollywood celebrities that attended the shows, including Ryan O’Neal, John Phillips, David Crosby, and Sonny Bono, Cher had this to say, after she walked out in the middle of a performance: “It depressed me. It will replace nothing—except maybe suicide.”¹⁸⁷ Her quotation was picked up by Warhol and reproduced in ads for the EPI in various newspapers. Obviously believing that no press is bad press, Warhol often delighted in circulating negative reviews of the EPI. One of the most reproduced quotations that Warhol used in advertisements came from the Chicago journalist Michaela Williams, who wrote two articles on the EPI performances at the club Poor Richard’s—one in anticipation of the show and one after she had attended it. In the second review she expressed her disappointment in Warhol’s delivery: “Eventually, the reverberations in your ears stop. But what do you do with what you still hear in your brain? The Flowers of Evil are in full bloom with the Exploding Plastic Inevitable; let’s hope it’s killed before it spreads.”¹⁸⁸

If there is any difference between responses by New York critics and those writing in other cities, it seems to be that the New York writers embrace, and even enjoy the alienation provided by the EPI shows, while the other writers seem to despise it outright. I am not pointing out this discrepancy in audience response for the purpose of

¹⁸⁶ Untitled article, Time capsule 14, Andy Warhol Archives, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

¹⁸⁷ Untitled article, Time capsule 14. Warhol refers to Cher’s remark in *POPism*, where he also claims that Sonny Bono stayed behind and seemed to enjoy himself. (Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 167.)

¹⁸⁸ Michaela Williams, “Warhol’s Brutal Assemblage Non-Stop Horror Show” *Chicago Daily News*, 22 June 1966, 34, photocopy from Time Capsule –7, Andy Warhol Archives, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

proposing a strict dichotomy between New York and other “outside” audiences. In the end, the regional differences may be a red herring. Nevertheless, the divide between New York and the other cities is telling, and some of the EPI performers cited the role drugs might have played in producing the varied responses to the show, especially when it came to the differences between east coast and west. New York crowds, and obviously those involved in the Factory, preferred amphetamine, while the San Francisco crowds preferred LSD. A brief anecdote by Warhol is emblematic of this point: “Ondine and the Duchess [Brigid Berlin] would shoot people up in the crowd if they halfway knew them. Once, from the balcony, I saw blood spurt in the strobe flash across Pauline de Rothschild and Cecil Beaton.”¹⁸⁹ This observation not only encapsulates the Warholian hallmark of leveling high and low culture in a single venue, but the casual nature of amphetamine use—even its compulsory status—at the New York EPI shows. Like Warhol’s social style, the widespread presence of amphetamine transcended stratifications of class, just as Dan McNeill would argue in his *Village Voice* article two years later.¹⁹⁰

As I mentioned in my above discussion of McNeill’s article, amphetamine communities and LSD communities were often at odds with one another. McNeill explains, “The drugs seem to occupy opposite poles in the Underground, in almost a Blakeian perspective of Heaven and Hell.” Hell, of course, is the amphetamine end of the

¹⁸⁹ Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 163.

¹⁹⁰ I don’t mean to imply that LSD did not have any presence at the Factory, or that it did not inform the aesthetic sensibilities of its frequenters. Another iconic segment of *The Chelsea Girls* features a monologue by Eric Emerson while under the influence of LSD. Recently, at a talk given at the University of Texas, I heard an archivist at the Andy Warhol Museum recount the moment when she and her colleagues discovered a tab of LSD in one of Warhol’s Time Capsules.

pole. He continues: “Amphetamine has no place in [the] metaphysical quest for illumination. An amphetamine comedown is not compatible with the love-joy-ecstasy trip.”¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, LSD and amphetamine often occupied the same spaces in the underground drug cultures of the 1960s, and the drugs were sometimes used in tandem. Furthermore, LSD and amphetamine can sometimes produce similar effects; when taken in high dosages, amphetamine can produce visual hallucinations and feelings of invincibility. One clinical study of amphetamine use likened the effects of amphetamine to LSD, but with one crucial difference: the user of LSD tends to understand that the drug has affected his motor skills, or that his perception of time and space has been skewed, and thus tends to resign himself to the trip. The amphetamine user, on the other hand, experiences an increased sense of control over his environment, and often does not understand or care that his ability to navigate the world in simple physical, logistic ways has been impaired.¹⁹² It is this sense of the ability to control or even to overcome one’s environmental situation that would give a person high on amphetamine an advantage at an EPI show, where the environment has been designed to feel out of control.

Many members of Warhol’s entourage note the marked difference between themselves and the California audiences, and they locate that difference in the west coast’s taste for LSD. Mary Woronov explains:

We spoke two completely different languages because we were on amphetamine and they were on acid...They were so slow to speak, with these wide eyes ... so into their vibrations; we spoke in rapid-machine-gun fire about books and paintings and movies. They were into free and the American Indian and going

¹⁹¹ McNeill, “The Amphetamine Apple in Psychedelic Eden,” 31.

¹⁹² Grinspoon and Hedblom, *The Speed Culture*, 110–111.

back to the land and trying to be some kind of true, authentic person; we could not have cared less about that. They were homophobic and we were homosexual. Their women—they were these big, round-titted girls; you would say hello to them, and they would just flop on the bed and fuck you; we liked sexual tension, S&M, *not* fucking. They were barefoot; we had platform boots. They were eating bread they had baked themselves—and we never ate at all!¹⁹³

Woronov has basically laid out, through her contrast with LSD, the sensibility associated with amphetamine for Warhol's Factory crowd. The amphetamine seemed to achieve a sense of edginess that the LSD did not—the amphetamine users prize tension, abstention and intellectualism, and totally disregard sincerity, emotionalism, and healthy diets. It is interesting, also, that Woronov identifies herself as a homosexual, since Woronov was not interested in sleeping with women. Her self-identification seems to have more to do with a particular sensibility than with a sexual preference, and it suggests that Woronov was aware that her allegiance to the amphetamine users automatically placed her in a category that was stigmatized like homosexuality, and which also existed outside mainstream social structures. That homosexuality to Woronov was more a sensibility and a stand-in for deviant behavior than a sexual preference seems apt, since Woronov then makes clear that abstention from sex is another identifying aspect of the amphetamine group. Indeed, studies of amphetamine reflect that the drug seems to result in a tendency of users to devalue sexual behaviors, and even to avoid physical contact with others.¹⁹⁴

Ronnie Cutrone, a technician for the EPI, identifies paranoia as a major component of the New York amphetamine scene in the 1960s: "Paranoia was really our

¹⁹³ Mary Woronov quoted in Torgoff, *Can't Find My Way Home*, 158–59.

¹⁹⁴ This is not true across the board; there are also accounts of hypersexual tendencies in the sociological literature on amphetamine abuse. See Grinspoon and Hedblom, *The Speed Culture*.

drug of choice, and we made jokes about it, even though it could be a scary, weird thing...” He goes on to elaborate on the original moniker given to the early EPI shows, “uptight”: “even the word *uptight* had positive connotations. If you were uptight, you were cranked out of your skull, you [sic] jaw was locked, and you were paranoid. We loved that nasty amphetamine edge.”¹⁹⁵ Ingrid Superstar echoes Cutrone’s ideas: “Uptight means to have so many different confusing things going on at one time, to attract or detract the audience’s attention in order to confuse them and make them nervous. Sometimes it even makes us nervous.”¹⁹⁶ Such paranoia manifested itself in the sort of backbiting and competition within the Factory crowd. This competition bred rifts in trust and encouraged alienation between people. As I have suggested with my characterization of the Factory above, alienation basically defined the relationships in the Factory, and a sense within the group that each person must fend for him- or herself. Warhol, in his recounting of the EPI shows on the west coast, addresses the divide between the Factory’s alienation and the west coast’s apparent need for togetherness. He mentions a comment by Paul Morrissey who, after an especially poorly received performance at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco, cites drugs as a main cause of the disparity between audiences in and out of New York:

Paul blamed LSD for the decline of humor in the sixties. He said the only person on LSD who had a sense of humor left was Timothy Leary.

In a way he was right, because when we went up to San Francisco, whenever we tried to have fun with somebody, they would act like “How dare you make a joke!” Everybody seemed to be taking the Cosmic Joke so seriously

¹⁹⁵ Torgoff, *Can’t Find My Way Home*, 145.

¹⁹⁶ Ingrid Superstar, “Movie Party at the Factory,” typescript, 26 March 1966, photocopy from Time Capsule –7, Andy Warhol Archives, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

they didn't want you to make little unc cosmic jokes. But on the other hand, the kids on acid did seem happy, enjoying all the simple things like hugs and kisses and nature.

The San Francisco scene was bands and audiences grooving together, sharing the experience, whereas the Velvets' style was to alienate people—they would actually play with their backs to the audience!

Anyhow, we were out of our element for sure...¹⁹⁷

On the plane coming home, Paul reflected, "You know, there's a lot to be said against San Francisco and its love children. People are always so boring when they band together. You have to be *alone* to develop all the idiosyncrasies that make a person interesting."¹⁹⁸

I am making this amphetamine / LSD distinction here not to suggest that audience members had to be on speed to "get" the shows; nor do I know whether or not LSD use proliferated at shows on the west coast. Rather, I am arguing that the artistic goals for those involved with the production of the EPI were informed by this sense of paranoia and individualism that amphetamine bred. And it is what I am calling this amphetamine sensibility—the essentially sadomasochistic implementation of an overwhelming set of temporal and sensorial components, be it long duration or monotony or the use of multiple media, that might induce spectators almost to relish the tension that it produces—that is the driving force behind the experience the EPI created.

One implication of my characterization of the EPI as emerging from an amphetamine sensibility is that it separates the EPI from a genealogy of psychedelic or consciousness-expanding art, which is where the EPI has traditionally fallen within art-historical discourse. In a catalog essay for the 2005 exhibition *Summer of Love* at the Tate

¹⁹⁷ Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 169.

¹⁹⁸ Warhol and Hackett, *Popism*, 170. It's important to point out that though Morrissey's comments are very astute, he was a fierce opponent of drug-taking.

Modern in London, Christoph Grunenberg identifies psychedelic art as being obviously aligned with an aesthetic that originated in the visual hallucinations provided by LSD.¹⁹⁹ Along these lines, he characterizes the style of psychedelic art as “excessive form expanding uncontrolled into space, providing instant sensual gratification through spectacular special effects,” and “valuing of the ecstasy of physical and mental experiences over rationalised form and enlightened theoretical discourse.” Such a psychedelic aesthetic, Grunenberg concludes, “was adopted by those in opposition to technocratic and profit-oriented systems and in search of a more humane and authentic society.”²⁰⁰ Placed firmly at the origins of Grunenberg’s history of psychedelic art is Warhol’s blatantly profit-oriented (think of Morrissey explaining that the reason they included the films was so they could charge more money for admission), inhumane, and consciousness-collapsing *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*. Grunenberg is totally aware of this incongruity in his genealogy; he admits, “There was nothing even faintly mystical or otherworldly about the show, Warhol setting the New York scene’s extreme hedonism, exhibitionism and certain cynicism against the all-embracing magnanimity of the hippies,” and he cites Mekas’ well-known characterization of the EPI, some of which I have already quoted above, as being “dominated by the ego.”²⁰¹ Grunenberg even goes so far as to include in his section on the EPI a reference to Morrissey’s quotation, which I

¹⁹⁹ Christoph Grunenberg, “The Politics of Ecstasy: Art for the Mind and Body,” in *Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era*, ed. Christoph Grunenberg (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 14.

²⁰⁰ Grunenberg, “The Politics of Ecstasy,” 13.

²⁰¹ Grunenberg, “The Politics of Ecstasy,” 32, quoting Mekas, “On the Plastic Inevitables and the Strobe Light,” 242.

also used above, in which he blames LSD for the poor reception of the EPI shows in San Francisco.

How, then, can Grunenberg justify his association of the EPI with the LSD-based psychedelic aesthetic of the 1960s? His reasoning is partly a product of his taking contemporary interpretations of the EPI shows at face value. *Life* magazine included Warhol in its own survey of multimedia light shows happening in the US in the mid-1960s, and Warhol, never one to contradict assumptions placed on the meaning or intent of his work by critics and contemporaries, participated in festivals that showcased the EPI as basically a psychedelic performance.²⁰² It seems that in the mid-1960s, the term “psychedelic” was used to encompass any form of multimedia event that included music and visual effects, just as the term “expanded cinema” was also used to denote the avant-garde film trend in multimedia experimentation.²⁰³

To be sure, there are formal similarities between the EPI and these other multimedia shows that occurred around 1966. Grunenberg locates the similarities between the EPI and the other shows in Warhol’s use of color; he argues that the “long strips of coloured paper” that adorned the silver factory on 47th Street are evidence of Warhol’s psychedelic bent.²⁰⁴ More obviously, the use of colored gels and slides at the EPI shows do align the EPI with other psychedelic shows of the period; this is undeniable, but this similarity, to my mind, does not compensate for the incongruities

²⁰² *Life*, 9 September 1966. The cover showcased a story on “LSD Art.”

²⁰³ See *Film Culture*, special “Expanded Arts” edition, no. 43 (1966).

²⁰⁴ Grunenberg is not referring to the strips of aluminum foil, but apparently to actual strips of paper that are apparent in Warhol’s color film *Since* (1966), and which Pat Patterson mentions in her article “A Day in the Factory,” *Cavalier* (December 1967), p. 60.

between the EPI and the broader phenomena of multimedia shows of the period. Nor does the presence of LSD use among members of Warhol's entourage automatically qualify Warhol's aesthetic as psychedelic, as Grunenberg argues, both because the use of LSD use by Factory regulars, although interesting in itself, was so relatively rare compared to the rampant use of amphetamine by the Warhol crowd and by Warhol himself.²⁰⁵ Grunenberg never mentions amphetamine during his discussion of Warhol and the EPI. This is not necessarily surprising, since amphetamine is not a drug known for its visual effects, and for an aesthetic that is so heavily defined by its visual characteristics, amphetamine would seem to have nothing to offer to the psychedelic. But to ignore the effects of amphetamine on Warhol's sensibility at this time results in an incomplete understanding of the EPI and its role in Warhol's artistic practice in the 1960s.

As I have already discussed, Warhol's artistic sensibility, borne out in his paintings, films, and multimedia performances, was not devoid of emotion—although some of those emotions were decidedly negative. Warhol's public persona has often been characterized as detached and cold, as lacking in feelings. Scholars often cite Warhol's own words in this regard; "I want to be a machine," and "It would be so much easier not to care," are two popular examples that tend to render Warhol and his art distant, dehumanized, or desensitized. As I suggested in my first chapter, what statements such as these really suggest is that Warhol, though he wants to be a machine, is decidedly not a

²⁰⁵ Instances of LSD use documented at the Factory by films and retrospective accounts: Eric Emerson is most likely on acid in the reel "Eric Says All" in *Chelsea Girls*, and Paul America was supposedly on LSD during the filming, along with much of the crew. (Bockris, *Warhol*, 231; Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 125–127.)

machine; though he thinks it would be easier not to care, he still cares, and he finds that fact difficult, even unpleasant. These are feelings—they're just bad feelings. Throughout Warhol's work, and often at the Factory, bad feelings prevail over good ones. Many of the people who were drawn to Warhol's world traded in paranoia, anxiety, insecurity, depression, and unhappiness. The euphoria and overblown egotism produced by amphetamines functioned to mask these bad feelings and to convert them into tools of power and fuel for competition.

A recent interpretation of the EPI by Branden Joseph resituates the meaning of the performances, and Joseph attempts to wrest the EPI out of the historical context in which critics such as Gene Youngblood and Marshall McLuhan have placed it.²⁰⁶ Joseph cites contemporary mass media reviews, many of which I have also cited, to acknowledge that the EPI performances actually resulted in a fragmentation of consciousness—a disorientation of the audience members that precluded Marshall McLuhan's notions of retribalization or Gene Youngblood's ideas about expanded consciousness. Joseph also points out, I think correctly, that the EPI “failed (in extended bouts of dissonant improvisation) to cohere comfortably within the norms of popular spectacle.”²⁰⁷ Joseph, in his conclusion, aims to revalue the EPI according to an alternative political strategy:

Within this environment [of the EPI shows], however, identifications were not disarticulated entirely into some kind of postmodern flux; the EPI was not simply a bricolage of existing signifiers, practices, and codes. Rather, it formed a multiplicitous situation or “image” in which the possibilities of subjective transformation were opened to forms of political appropriation. Not primarily by

²⁰⁶ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1970).; Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967).

²⁰⁷ Joesph, “‘My Mind Split Open’,” 97.

the proletarian mass or the official, and often essentialist, counterculture, but by delinquents, drag queens, addicts and hustlers: a “group”, as Kathy Acker observed about the Factory, “who at that time no decent person, not even a hippy, would recognise as being human”. It was a group, however, that would later emerge within punk and a politicised gay subculture.²⁰⁸

What Joseph has attempted to do with his essay is to acknowledge that the presumed historical context and import of the EPI is in fact inaccurate—the EPI does not actually fit within the prescribed parameters of McLuhan’s or Youngblood’s utopic visions for multimedia spectacles to effect a heightened consciousness for the participants. Yet Joseph, in his quest to identify a redeeming social and political meaning for Warhol’s EPI, has fallen into another historical trap: he ascribes to the EPI the power of political liberation. He seems to suggest that the EPI, with its ultra-permissive conglomeration of dissonant media, which often featured “decadent” content, somehow sets the stage for identity politics; it is a pre-Stonewall harbinger for gay liberation and the punk political agenda.²⁰⁹

But what if Warhol’s EPI is “simply a bricolage of existing signifiers, practices, and codes”? Why must the performances be redeemed by historians as a fully-formed “image” with political import? In her book *Feeling Backward*, Heather Love focuses on literary subjects that refuse the impulse to redemption that queer studies often imposes on its subjects: “A shared feeling of backwardness in relation to the coming of modern homosexual identity is what draws me to these authors. While contemporary gay, lesbian, and queer critics tend to see queer subjects during this period as isolated and longing for a

²⁰⁸ Joseph, “‘My Mind Split Open’,” 110.

²⁰⁹ Joseph, “‘My Mind Split Open’,” 110.

future community, the texts I consider turn their backs on the future: they choose isolation, turn toward the past, or choose to live in a present disconnected from any larger historical continuum.”²¹⁰ As I discussed in my Introduction, as a queer subject, Warhol belongs to the historical moment that directly precedes the post-Stonewall era of gay liberation. It is easy, because of his fame and his secure position as one of the most important figures in the history of 20th century art, to assume that his artistic projects of the 1960s contain political import for the gay liberation movement.²¹¹ In fact, the stakes are higher for Warhol’s work to retain redemptive artistic power precisely because of his undisputed art-historical status. Though it is indisputable that later activist groups cited Warhol’s artworks as inspiration for their political agendas, Joseph’s refusal to historicize the EPI as anything less than politically crucial does little to elucidate the motivations and feelings behind the conception of Warhol’s cinema at the time of its execution.

It is entirely possible, if not likely, that Warhol’s EPI, and in fact much of Warhol’s artistic practice of the 1960s, reflects less Warhol’s political stance in relation to the impending gay liberation movement, and instead is representative of Warhol’s

²¹⁰ Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 8.

²¹¹ For histories of the gay liberation movement in the US preceding the Stonewall riots in June 1969, see John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); and Jeffrey Escoffier “The Political Economy of the Closet: Notes toward an Economic History of Gay and Lesbian Life before Stonewall,” in *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life*, ed. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (New York: Routledge, 1997), 123–134. One of the first art historians to analyze Warhol’s artworks in relation to his homosexuality was Trevor Fairbrother, who discusses Warhol’s line drawings of men, body parts, and other objects in terms of their homoerotic overtones. Fairbrother relates some of Warhol’s imagery from the 1950s to magazines that focus on the male physique, such as *Tomorrow’s Man*, and others that were the earliest promotions of the gay liberation movement, such as *One*. See Trevor Fairbrother, “Tomorrow’s Man,” in “*Success is a Job in New York*” *The Early Art and Business of Andy Warhol*, ed. Donna DeSalvo (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, 1989), 55–74.

choice “to live in a present disconnected from any larger historical continuum,” if that continuum happens to be homosexual identity or queer politics. The EPI was not a vehicle to establish pride for the “degenerates” that constituted Warhol’s Factory. It seems, in fact, that pride was beside the point—pride being the empowering emotion that defines much of the politics of gay liberation. It is difficult, and I think perhaps unproductive, to identify in Warhol’s EPI any sort of future-directed behaviors or agendas, political or otherwise. The shows seem instead to be a purposeful dead end—a loop that feeds back in on itself and repeats over and over, with varying degrees of success, in venues across the country. In this way, it is more the manifestation of a refusal, or at least a challenge, to create anything that could be interpreted as wholly meaningful or redemptive.

In a 1968 study entitled “Circles Beyond the Circumference: Some Hunches about Amphetamine Abuse,” the sociologist Seymour Fiddle characterizes amphetamine use as a voluntary infliction of “chemical trauma” on the body of the user. The user, after injecting or otherwise ingesting the drug, engages in activities that have no particular intended consequence or goal other than the alleviation of that trauma. Many such activities occur amongst groups of amphetamine users, which Fiddle identifies as a subculture. Collecting stones, painting, or rummaging through drawers are examples. The groups also tend to disregard boundaries between personal property, overtly and casually entering other people’s homes and scrutinizing their belongings. Fiddle calls these periods of amphetamine-induced group dynamics “crazes.” He describes one amphetamine user:

His circle of friends lie off the circumference of a society where the market pattern is dominant; moving around the societal circumference, he finds in the deviation a secondary source of restlessness. The aim of life becomes activity and hyperactivity. The elaborate trivialization of their lives expresses their indifference to the values of the commercial point of view²¹²

Fiddle likens these crazes to adolescent activity because they have a myopic focus on one object, though the amphetamine users are often much older than adolescents. The implication here is that the subjects should have matured beyond the petty preoccupations that consume them because of their drug abuse:

In sum, these crazes are group patterns of discharging the chemical traumas which these peak users experience. Under the impact of group use of amphetamine, a trauma, mutually induced, is worked out in a hyperactivity which spirals up continually; being reinforced continually by the pleasurable and even painful consequences of the abuse, it produces a temporary sense of communion within a small group that knows itself to be off the circumference of conventional life.²¹³

With this statement, Fiddle inadvertently obscures the meaning of his use of the word trauma; he refers specifically to the chemical trauma of amphetamine, but he also suggests that the subcultures that form around the drug are also escaping the traumas of feeling excluded from “conventional life.” Their use of the drug, inextricable from their daily habits, engages them in a level of meaningless interaction with their surroundings, thus exempting them from confronting their status as stigmatized according to mainstream standards.

The escape into the meaninglessness of the amphetamine experience is to escape into an alternative temporality in which the drug takes over all other human impulses.

²¹² Seymour Fiddle, “Circles Beyond the Circumference: Some Hunches about Amphetamine Abuse,” in *Amphetamine Abuse*, ed. J. Robert Russo (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1968), 70.

²¹³ Fiddle, “Circles Beyond the Circumference,” 72.

McNeill describes the trajectory of the amphetamine drug experience, explaining, “To understand amphetamine, you have to think in terms of space”:

You can force your body to function on an amphetamine diet for several days. Soon you will be “spaced” and well into the timeless oblivion of an amphetamine vigil. The stomach is tight and empty. It is an ideal fast, unencumbered by hunger. The nerves are taut, senses overtuned, mind and body glutted with impotent energy, but you are high, spaced, and cluttered reality shimmers around you. Being spaced is a pace of mind. The pace is accelerated by the perpetual, haunting illusion that something is catching up behind you. For diversion, you can strain the senses, dissolve into raga rock blasting through earphones, lose yourself in the flashing energy of a strobe light, and submerge in environmental madness. It doesn’t hurt. The body seems beyond pain, the senses beyond protest.²¹⁴

Though he never explicitly says so, McNeill here identifies the elements of the EPI as outlets for a release from the sensory overload caused by amphetamine use. Beyond its function as a pressure valve for the inner madness that occurs with overstimulation, its meaning remains obscured.

* * *

In a scene from *Pie in the Sky*, the 2000 documentary on Brigid Berlin, the filmmakers Vincent and Shelley Dunn Fremont follow Berlin to The Chelsea Hotel, which she has not visited in several decades. Upon entering the lobby, Berlin quickly decides that she cannot stay in the space. She has to go outside, and seems almost to hyperventilate. Outside on the sidewalk, she declares that she never wants to go back there again. This scene occurs toward the end of the film, after over an hour of scenes of in which Berlin struggles to maintain control over her life—her weight, the order of her home which she obsessively cleans, her memories of her past as a Warhol superstar, and

²¹⁴ McNeill, “The Amphetamine Apple in Psychedelic Eden,” 11.

her strained and estranged relationship with her family. A few minutes later, the film's last shot shows Berlin walking away from the camera, as she ruminates on her own death, and the prospect of seeing Andy Warhol and her mother waiting for her, in "the pie in the sky." It is tempting to interpret Berlin's amphetamine use in the 1960s as an escape from the pressures imposed upon her by her class and her gender; she was an heiress, bred to marry well and to be a socialite. But her obesity led her parents to put her on amphetamines for weight loss and her marriage failed. She became enamored with the drugs, abandoned her prescribed future and immersed herself in the scene at Warhol's Factory. After seeing Berlin in *The Chelsea Girls*, her mother called her on the phone, disgusted by what she had seen and nearly ready to disown her.

Berlin was one of the most hard-living members of Warhol's Factory, at least before she quit taking speed in the late 1960s. She remains as one of the only surviving central figures involved in the amphetamine community that inhabited the Factory in the mid-1960s. Watching her remember her own life in the Chelsea Hotel, it is difficult not to sense that she has regrets, and her feelings about that time appear unresolved—and this lack of resolution seems to be her preference. So, as a way of resisting my own impulse as a historian to come to some sort of resolution at the end of my discussion, instead of rationalizing Berlin's reaction to confronting a past that she shared with so many others who did not survive, and which we as outsiders years later can never fully understand or comprehend—instead of ascribing to their histories the weight of either achievement or failure—I will end with a quotation by Heather Love:

...the work of the historian is a kind of “interminable analysis.” Taking care of the past without attempting to fix it means living with bad attachments, identifying through loss, allowing ourselves to be haunted...Still, it is not clear what would constitute proper care for ghosts like these (with their funny emotions). Turning back toward them seems essential, but it also demands something that is, in the end, more difficult: allowing them to turn their back on us.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Love, *Feeling Backward*, 43. Love’s use of the term “funny emotions” is a reference to Henry Abelow’s quotation of Allen Ginsberg, who referred to Frank O’Hara as a “curator of funny emotions.” (Henry Abelow, *Deep Gossip* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003], xi.) Love is extrapolating Abelow’s notion that curating, unlike curing, is a practice of managing difference instead of eradicating it.

Chapter Three: Live Cultures

In early November 1967, Andy Warhol and Viva stood on the balcony of a hotel in Tucson, Arizona watching a man mow the lawn below. The two of them had come to Arizona with a few other Factory regulars to do a series of lectures across the American Southwest.²¹⁶ While observing the landscaper, Warhol reportedly turned to Viva and said, “Gee, I bet it’s really nice to do that... Out in the sun all day in a nice, warm climate. I think I might like to do that.” “Me too,” Viva replied. “In fact, I’m not getting on the plane unless you promise me we can come back and make a movie.”²¹⁷ By January 1968, Warhol, Viva and Paul Morrissey, along with a coterie of actors and crew members, had returned to Tucson to make that movie.

By all accounts of the filming of *Lonesome Cowboys*, no finished screenplay for the film existed. Supposedly, a version of a script had been circulating amongst the film’s participants in New York before they left for Arizona, but it seems that by the time the

²¹⁶ Warhol’s Arizona lecture tour in Fall 1967 directly followed a series of lectures in which the actor Allen Midgette, who also appears in *Lonesome Cowboys*, impersonated Warhol at a number of venues across the country, mostly in October of that year. Midgette was eventually found to be an imposter, and Warhol had to revisit the various locations and redo the lectures. There is no evidence, however, that the Arizona lectures were part of that recompensatory tour. For an account of the faked lecture tour, see Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1980), 247–248; and Steven Watson, *Factory Made: Warhol and the Sixties* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003), 348–350.

²¹⁷ Shirley Pasternack, “Warhol,” *City Magazine* (Tucson) May 1989, 40. Pasternack cites a 1987 *Village Voice* article by Viva as the source for this anecdote. According to Pasternack, who had invited Warhol to lecture on behalf of Tucson’s Jewish Community Center, the Arizona lectures, which occurred in Tempe, Phoenix and Tucson within a span of days, involved Viva and Warhol, Paul Morrissey, and Taylor Mead. In Tucson, the group screened reels from *Chelsea Girls* and answered audience questions. Other accounts of the lecture describe negative reactions by audience members, who were confused or simply annoyed by Warhol’s refusal to elaborate on many of his one-word answers to their questions. (Dan Pavillard, “Warhol Film Audience Forgets Its Manners,” *Tucson Daily Citizen*, November 1967; “Evening with Warhol” [Letter to the Editor], *Arizona Star*, 14 November 1967; Anonymous typescript of a letter to the Jewish Community Center, November 6 [?1967]. All clippings are from the Warhol clippings files at the Film Studies Center, Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed October 2008.)

group had gathered in Tucson, this script had either been lost or discarded.²¹⁸ The general idea for the story, as told to the press, involved a loose adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, but besides the cowboys' animosity toward the courtship (if it can even be called such) between Viva's character "Ramona" and "Julian," played by Tom Hompertz, and the final scene in which Viva commits suicide with the aid of her nurse, the film's parallels with Shakespeare's play are barely discernible. In addition to Warhol, Morrissey, Hompertz and Viva, whose Ramona was "the only Capulet" and the only female cast member, the group that gathered in Tucson included Taylor Mead, in the role of Ramona's nurse Nellie; Francis Francine, the sheriff; and the cowboy brothers, played by Louis Waldron, Allen Midgette, Julian Burroughs, Joe Dallesandro, and Eric Emerson. Fred Hughes was also present, as was the artist John Chamberlain, who joined the crew to help Warhol as a technical director and to observe the filmmaking process. Chamberlain had been driven into town by a peripheral and apparently rather wild personality named Vera Cruz, who appears briefly in a scene toward the end of the film.²¹⁹

The group had plans to stay at Rancho Linda Vista in Oracle, Arizona, about thirty miles north of Tucson atop a rolling hill with expansive views of the desert below and mountains in the distance. Shirley Pasternack had connected Warhol with Charles

²¹⁸ According to one Tucson journalist, actor Julian Burroughs claimed to have written a script for the film, but Tom Hompertz responded to that claim by saying he had never seen a script. Mead also reported that although a script had existed, by the time they arrived in Tucson it had been cut down to about three pages of ideas. (Dan Pavillard, "Romeo and Juliet: Warhol, '68, Wherefore Art Thou ,Script?" Unlabeled, undated clipping from the Warhol clippings files at the Film Studies Center, Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed October 2008. Pasternack cites Pavillard's headline as being from the *Tucson Daily Citizen*. [Pasternack, "Warhol," 40.]

²¹⁹ Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 259–260.

Littler, one of the owners of the ranch and an art professor at the University of Arizona. The ranch, which included multi-room houses, a barn, stables, some smaller cottages, and a swimming pool, had recently been purchased by a group of local artists who were using the property as an artist's community.²²⁰ The Warhol group stayed at Rancho Linda Vista for about a week, occupying one of the larger houses and a few of the single-room guest cottages on the property.²²¹

Warhol had arranged for the rental of horses and reserved Old Tucson, a western movie set just outside of Tucson, for his shooting location. The set was authentic in the sense that it had been used for filming Westerns—it still maintained the facades of an old west town square, complete with a series of storefronts, dirt roads, hitching posts, and a mission church. However, there were cracks in the verisimilitude of this old Western set. Since its heyday in the 1940s, the venue had become more of a tourist attraction than a site of film production. In the first minutes of *Lonesome Cowboys*, when the band of cowboy brothers ride into town on their horses, effectively invading the settlement and casting themselves as outsiders, they ride past a souvenir shop called “Cactus Creations,” which is clearly anachronistic; such a shop would never have existed in the “old West,” or for that matter in any of the Westerns shot on this site before it opened to the public as a tourist destination [figure 7]. Warhol's inclusion of the shop's signage in this opening

²²⁰ Rancho Linda Vista is still operational today, and contains several artist studios and a gallery space. In *POPism*, Warhol describes a “dude ranch” where he and his crew stayed, at least during the filming at Old Tucson, “run by an old man and his wife who were busy trying to sell it so they could retire into a mobile home and travel the country.” (Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 261.) Pasternack never mentions such a couple in her detailed account of Warhol's visit to film *Lonesome Cowboys*, and this detail by Warhol remains anomalous to all other accounts I have encountered from Tucson residents.

²²¹ Pasternak, “Warhol,” 40. The account of the layout of the ranch property and the areas occupied by Warhol are from an interview conducted with Selina Littler at Rancho Linda Vista in February 2011.

scene, as well as in several subsequent shots, suggests that he wanted to underscore the artificiality of the set as well as the decline of its original purpose as a set for shooting Westerns, which, by extension, is emblematic of the drop in the production of Westerns in Hollywood by the late 1960s.

Very soon after they arrived at Old Tucson, Warhol and his group clashed with the locals and tourists who witnessed the filming [figure 8]. Warhol recounts in *POPism*:

It was a misty day we started shooting *Lonesome Cowboys*. The dialogue the boys were coming out with was going along the lines of “You dirty cocksucking motherfucker, what the hell is wrong with you?” and in the middle of this type of thing, we saw that they were bringing a bunch of tourists in, announcing, “You’re about to see a movie in production....” Then the group of sightseers marched in to “You fags! You queers! I’ll show you who’s the real cowboy around here, goddamn it!” They started going nuts, rushing their kids away and everything.

Eventually, the grips, the electricians, and the people who build the sets formed a vigilante committee to run us out of town, just like in a real cowboy movie. We were all standing on the drugstore porch, except for Eric, who was doing his ballet exercises at the hitching post, when a group of them came over and said, “You perverted easterners, go back the hell where you came from.”

Viva told them, “Fuck you.”²²²

Warhol goes on to describe how the local sheriff got involved on that same day. Officers arrived by helicopter and stood on top of a water tower monitoring the cast’s behavior, ready to arrest anybody who took off their clothes. Because conditions became too disruptive at Old Tucson, they were unable to continue shooting there and cut short their second day of filming.

In *POPism*, Warhol recounts his experience of filming *Lonesome Cowboys* as if it were the plot of an actual Western. His group is like the band of cowboys in his film:

²²² Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 261–62.

they invade a small town and disrupt the lawful peace of the area. According to his story, Warhol and his gang are also outlaws—they are the easterners, the queers, the recalcitrant perverts—and the locals comprise a vigilante group that represents the threatened townsfolk, made up of morally upright heterosexuals. Warhol's analogy alludes to what was probably the attitude of Warhol's group as a whole: they had come out west not only to shoot a cowboy movie, but to experience their own contemporary version of living within a cowboy movie—to inhabit the lifestyle of the idyllic west as they imagined it might have been, but also to invade and disrupt the actual space of the west, a place in which they were so obviously outsiders.

Warhol's biographer Victor Bockris claims that after Warhol's stint at Old Tucson elicited so much attention from the authorities, the local Arizona community objected so strongly to Warhol's presence that the group was forced to return to New York to finish shooting the film.²²³ In fact, although the crew was unable to complete their final day of filming at Old Tucson, they reconvened on the Rancho Linda Vista property, finished shooting the film there, and remained at the ranch for the rest of the week. The town of Oracle was, and in some respects still is, a sparsely populated area remote and isolated from Tucson, but Selina Littler, who was about ten years old when the Warhol crew came to stay at her home as the guest of her father Charles, remembers that a small crowd, made up of many of her childhood friends and their parents, arrived one day to watch a famous artist make a movie. The scene they shot that day was the rape of Viva by the band of cowboys.

²²³ Victor Bockris, *Warhol* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), 288.

The rape scene in the final cut of *Lonesome Cowboys* occurs about 45 minutes into the film (the entire film is about 2 hours and 15 minutes long).²²⁴ The opening shot shows Viva on her horse, confronting the group of cowboys who have convened in a flat, dusty clearing, before a backdrop of brushy trees. She is wearing a satin burgundy button-down blouse and burgundy pants, and the camera stays trained on her in a medium shot that captures her from the waist up, and occasionally a fragment of another cowboy, as her horse moves her unsteadily inside the frame. She demands to know who has come onto her property, yells “Get off my ranch!” and hits some of the cowboys with a riding crop. The cowboys begin yelling at her—some call her a “fucker” and a “cunt,” and claim that the ranch now belongs to them. It becomes clear that the cowboys have surrounded her; one has climbed a tree and is visible looming behind her. After a couple quick strobe cuts, Viva finally says, “OK, OK I’m getting off,” and dismounts from her horse. The cowboys then yell things like, “Grab her,” “Hold her down,” “Get her,” and “Fuck her.” The camera follows her as they back her up against a tree. For a moment she breaks free and tries to run, but they quickly wrestle her to the ground and push her back into the sand. The camera jerks back and forth, although the lens is zoomed too close to capture an establishing shot of the action. Viva protests, saying “No,” and “You’re

²²⁴ All of my descriptions of this film are the product of multiple screenings. At the Andy Warhol Museum I watched two versions: one with an added soundtrack and title credits, and another with no added sound or titles. The latter film, according to Greg Pierce, was the version originally distributed by Warhol in 1968 (conversation with Pierce, Fall 2008). I also watched this “original” version at the Wexner Center for the Arts during a screening in association with its 2009 exhibition *Andy Warhol: Other Voices, Other Rooms*. Most subsequent viewings of the film are from a DVD version released by the Italian company Raro Video. As some of these DVDs in the Raro series have inconsistencies in editing and camera movement compared to the preserved film versions, I screened the film at MoMA in August 2012 to confirm that my descriptions were as accurate as I am capable of making them, unavoidable slips of memory notwithstanding.

hurting me.” We see the scuffle as an array of midsections and legs moving from one side of the screen to the next, until finally the camera alights on Viva’s torso at the moment when a cowboy rips her shirt open to reveal her breasts. Tom Hompertz, who plays Julian to Viva’s Ramona, sits on his knees between her legs while another cowboy holds her shoulders down. Tom begins to fondle her belt buckle as if he is going to pull her pants off, but he alternates between doing this and rubbing dirt onto her bare midsection. The cowboys yell and giggle, and Viva shrieks in protest. Taylor Mead, in the role of Viva’s nurse, limply attempts either to protect his employer or to pimp her out, or both, giggling and telling the cowboys that she costs “one-fifty.” Viva’s repeated screams have become steady, the main sound on the soundtrack. Before Tom unbuttons her pants, Louis Waldron tackles Mead, and they collapse in front of her, effectively filling the foreground and blocking the camera’s view of Viva and the Tom. Waldron begins to dry hump Mead, as Mead laughs while shrieking, “No stop! I’m two-fifty! I’m two-fifty!” The camera then moves slightly to capture one shot of Viva’s face, grimacing, her eyes closed, although Waldron’s attack of the hysterically squealing Mead takes up most of the space in the foreground. For about twenty seconds, Mead’s own screams overlay Viva’s, and the effect is a cacophony of pure screeching. Finally Waldron and Mead sit up, and reveal the action taking place in the background: Eric Emerson holding Viva’s bare legs in his hands, spreading her legs open, as he yells, “Get in there, boy! Get in there! Get in there!” Amongst other chatter and laughter, another cowboy says, “That’s how the West was won.” Another cowboy places his hat over her vagina.

Immediately a strobe cut interrupts the action. The camera resumes recording after what seems like only a few seconds. In a long shot that shows Viva in the middle of the dirt clearing, we see her sitting up and covering herself with her clothes, and she screams, very forcefully, “You filthy pigs! Fags! Anyway you’re all fags!” She is still pantless, and with her knees pulled up to her chest, her vagina is plainly visible in the shot. Mead, still giggling, sits down next to her and declares, “Don’t worry baby we made a hundred and thirty-five dollars,” to which Viva immediately replies, in a breathy and casual tone, “We did?” (Later she instructs Mead to put the money into the stock market.) Another cut reveals a close-up of Viva, with a jacket around her shoulders and wearing a cowboy hat, looking into the distance. She says emphatically, “Disgusting pigs, look at all those children shocked out of their minds.” The voice of a cowboy replies, “They’re your children.” After the next strobe cut, the camera has zoomed out to a long shot, which frames Viva sitting in the clearing and the group of cowboys in the shallow background, gathered on the side of a small incline.²²⁵ There are several more seconds of banter and some catty remarks, which are not easily audible. The last cut, which ends the scene, occurs just as Viva turns and says to one of the cowboys, “One more impertinence

²²⁵ This shift in perspective could also be the result of an actual post-production cut between two separate films. J. Hoberman’s *New York Times* article on the occasion of the 2013 theatrical release of *San Diego Surf*, during this period Warhol and Morrissey each operated cameras when filming. (J. Hoberman, “A Warhol Film Surfaces, but Is It His?” *New York Times* 18 January 2013, accessed 18 February 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/20/movies/san-diego-surf-maybe-a-warhol-film-at-moma.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.) It’s possible that two cameras were used during the filming of *Lonesome Cowboys*—and certainly some of the clean cuts in the film that reflect a shift in perspective with almost no time seeming to have elapsed corroborate this notion. None of the films or photographs I have seen that depict the filming of *Lonesome Cowboys* show two cameras in use at the same time.

out of you and the fuck is off!” The entire episode has lasted, from the time Viva dismounts her horse to the time she sits up to cover herself, less than two minutes.

As I explained earlier, the role of Warhol’s camera in many of his films is that of a surrogate spectator—but a spectator with a specific point of view. The camera is often, as Parker Tyler points out, “the ultimate empathizer,” because its movements basically mimic the chaos of the action transpiring before it, thus conveying the chaos the actors might be experiencing to a hypothetical spectator in a theater. Because I have based my own description on what Warhol’s camera captured, and how his editing of the film utilized that footage, my own experience of this scene is at an extra remove from how other people who actually witnessed this scene live might have experienced it. If it is unclear in *Lonesome Cowboys* whether the acting was all play or seriously violent, which I believe my description suggests, such ambiguity must have been just as powerful, if not more so, to those who had no apparatus like a camera to mediate their experiences of watching the cowboys physically assault Viva. To a group of people unaccustomed to watching the filming of a movie, the entire undifferentiated site of production might have appeared particularly strange: a group of men stripping Viva and then simulating her rape while a couple of other men playfully mock that rape, as yet another man looks on recording it with his camera and surrounded by a group of technicians, seemingly unfazed as they observe the scene taking place. In fact, a group of local filmmakers from the University of Arizona was also there that day, which included Charles Littler and Shirley Pasternack, who were making their own 8mm film of Warhol making his film—so just who was inside and outside of the frame, and of which film, was likely even more

difficult to comprehend for many of the people who were present during the scene [figure 9].

After Warhol and his crew had returned to New York, Selina remembers that her friends were no longer allowed to visit her on the ranch. “They thought my dad and everybody were just a bunch of hippies running around having sex and doing drugs...which was true,” she says, but the Warhol incident had confirmed those parents’ suspicions, and given them a concrete reason to keep their children from the property. Selina’s recollection of that day of shooting on the ranch provides significant context for the rape scene, in particular when considering Viva’s remark, “Look at those children, shocked out of their minds.” Without knowing that there were actual children present during the filming, this line seems to make no sense. In fact, the FBI agents who attended a screening of *Lonesome Cowboys* in San Francisco made a note of Viva’s comment in their detailed but rather dry synopsis of the film: “At the end of this scene the woman sat up and said, ‘Now look---you have embarrassed those children.’ There were no children in the movie.”²²⁶ But of course, there were children present—not within the frame, but nevertheless, in a sense, as part of the movie as experienced by Viva. And this a crucial distinction that I want to highlight in my discussion of *Lonesome Cowboys*: the film as it exists in its material form, as a feature-length movie that was distributed commercially in

²²⁶ Margia Kramer, *Andy Warhol et al. The FBI File on Andy Warhol* (New York: UnSub Press, 1988), 36. The conflict between Warhol’s crew and the local crew at Old Tucson may have prompted the creation of Warhol’s FBI file. Due to an anonymous complaint from somebody in Arizona, the FBI began tracking Warhol’s whereabouts and keeping tabs on his films, including *Lonesome Cowboys*. (Kramer, *Andy Warhol et al.*, iv-v.) Richard Meyer puts Warhol’s FBI file to use in his discussion of Warhol’s experience with censorship and accusations of obscenity throughout his fine art career. (Richard Meyer, “Most Wanted Men,” in *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* [Boston: Beacon Press, 2002], 153–155.)

movie houses across the country in 1968, is in many ways only a vestigial object. It is the leftover product of a complex experience that involved not just Warhol and his crew, but an entire community of people in Arizona, whose experiences also comprise a more comprehensive project, for which the process of making the film provided the catalyst.

It makes sense, then, that viewers of the film who had little knowledge of this larger context might find little of interest in the completed film—especially if they were to attempt to transpose conventional standards onto the film, such as the visible authority of the director, some adherence to genre and narrative structure, or clearly developed themes, moral or otherwise. Critics in the mass media never considered *Lonesome Cowboys* to be a serious attempt to make a Western. They often identify elements of parody in the film, and suggest that it is a spoof of the Western genre. It is understandable too that reporters, limited to short articles or notices, would rely on the designation of spoof or parody to avoid engaging with the parts of the film that are more complicated and difficult to explain, or that don't seem to engage directly with Western conventions. During the film's theatrical release in 1968, Kevin Thomas of *The Los Angeles Times*, after noting the film's flimsy and disjointed plot and the affinity between one of the cowboys and a "Times Square hustler," sums up the film this way: "Between several notable encounters between Viva! [sic] and the boys there are a number of long-winded extemporized conversations between the fellows, most of whom are handsome in the

Warhol street-urchin tradition. Interestingly, they have an easier, non-violent masculinity than the mythic Hollywood cowboys they're spoofing."²²⁷

A contemporaneous reviewer in the Hollywood trade publication *Variety* also ascribes a parodic aspect to *Lonesome Cowboys* and describes the film only in terms of Warhol's actors. The reviewer identifies any efforts toward plot and character development as pretexts for the Warhol superstars to engage in exhibitionism: "Anti-director and his friends, including Viva, a scarecrow of indeterminate sexuality, light in Arizona, dress up in cowboy suits, abuse a few saddle horses, goose one another, screech dirty words, have lovers' quarrels, and strip Viva... 'Cowboys' is simply an unedited but in-focus home movie for homosexuals and a 'drag' in every play on the word."²²⁸

A smaller, independent and regional publication, the *Spokane NATURAL*, provides another rather flip interpretation of the film's plot:

The film...centers around Super-star Viva and her somewhat winsome male (?) nurse, played by Taylor Meade [sic]. They occupy a ranch just outside of a small typical western town...

The peaceful settlement is interrupted by the arrival of a band of roving cowboys. They ride into town and immediately take various attitudes towards our stars, Viva and Nellie the Nurse. Viva thinks they are trying to rape her; Nursey wants them to rape him!

However, the cowboys have other interests, namely each other. Humorous scenes abound as they have a gay old time all over town.²²⁹

²²⁷ Kevin Thomas, "'Cowboy' on Cinema Screen," *Los Angeles Times*. 19 December 1968, F27.

²²⁸ "Lonesome Cowboys," *Variety*, 3 November 1968.

²²⁹ T. A. Reynard, "At the Cinema: Warhol's Lonesome Cowboy," *Spokane NATURAL*, Dec. 5-18, p. 8. Clipping from Time Capsule 7, Andy Warhol Museum Archive, accessed October 2009. Both this review and the review in the *LA Times* contain references to Francis Francine's character of the sheriff, namely his tendency to cross-dress. By omitting these details I am not trying to downplay the *Times*' recognition of unconventional elements of the film. Instead, I want to streamline my argument to focus on the reviewers' interpretation of the film's overall narrative.

The overall tone of all the notices is rather dismissive: the cowboys are gay, maybe they rape Viva, but ultimately it doesn't really matter, because this is a spoof, and sometimes a funny one, but ultimately not a very interesting film.²³⁰

Stephen Koch, in his chapter on *Lonesome Cowboys*, which appears in his 1973 book *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films*, makes it very clear that he thinks the film itself is an utter failure: "Warhol's Western is a bad film, even an abominably bad film. It is sloppily made. It does not do what it wants to do. It is very boring."²³¹ Also, "in *Lonesome Cowboys*, Warhol undertook to rely on the format of the Western, on the direction of actors, on his resourcefulness at the editing table, and on luck to create an intelligible or interesting sequence of human events. He entirely failed."²³² Although I'm not sure this was his intention, both of Koch's above quotations imply that Warhol has somehow failed to make a successful Western. In one statement, Koch implicitly links the film's boringness with its inability to do "what it wants to do," which we may infer is at least partially to be a good Western. In the other, Koch believes Warhol's choice to "rely on the format of the Western" has failed—thus he has failed the genre as a whole, in

²³⁰ *Lonesome Cowboys* opened at the 55th Street Playhouse and the Garrick Theater in New York on 5 May 1969. (Bockris, *Warhol*, 322.) The film was distributed across the country, and was seized for obscenity in an Atlanta theater, although those charges were later dropped due to the illegal circumstances of the seizure. ("Raid Warhol 'Cowboys,' Photo Patrons (Who Scram Fast) for Homosexual File," *Variety*, 13 August 1969; "Force Six Deletions in 'Lonesome Cowboys,'" *Variety*, 31 December 1969. Both clippings reproduced in Kramer, *Andy Warhol et al.*, 55–56.) *Lonesome Cowboys* was also included in the San Francisco Film Festival, but contrary to an account by Taylor Mead (quoted in Bockris, *Warhol*, p. 322), it did not receive the award for best film, at least according to a researcher at the San Francisco Film Festival offices, during an email exchange, March 29–30, 2011.

²³¹ Stephen Koch, *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films* (New York: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1985), 105.

²³² Koch, *Stargazer*, 106. Ultimately, these particular complaints by Koch, which are not even very original in terms of critiques of Warhol's films, function more as a rhetorical strategy than as statements with critical weight. Of course Koch believes the film has been successful at something; he qualifies each of his statements about how the film fails by enumerating its virtues, which exist in spite of its failure, and he spends nine pages describing exactly what he believes the film's significance is.

addition to the other technical failures he incurred along the way. By “good Western,” I do not mean to suggest that Koch really expected Warhol to make a seamlessly edited narrative film featuring an unambiguous conflict between good and evil set in the unforgiving, uncivilized American frontier. Nevertheless, Koch did expect Warhol to adhere to particular standards—to confront and explicitly grapple with the defining characteristics of the Western genre.

Koch’s own standards for how a film should deal properly with genre derive partially from Annette Michelson’s mid-1960s writings on avant-garde film and surrealism. Koch argues that *Lonesome Cowboys* lacks immanence, a quality that Michelson alludes to in her 1965 essay “Film and the Radical Aspiration,” when discussing Jean-Luc Godard’s film *Alphaville* (also 1965): “[*Alphaville*’s] conceptual and formal complexities fuse into an elaborate and precisely articulated metaphor of immanence, of the ambiguity of location and dislocation, in both their spatial and temporal modes.”²³³ *Alphaville* takes place in the future, but was shot on location in Paris, and thus produces a visual conflict of expectations in the viewer, in terms of both temporality and genre conventions (in *Alphaville*’s case, the genre of science-fiction). Although the film is a science fiction fantasy, the setting would have been familiar to contemporary French audiences, thus allowing the film to represent a seamless illusion of fantasy taking place within a semblance of reality. It is the ambiguous combination of

²³³ Annette Michelson, “Film and the Radical Aspiration,” *Film Culture Reader*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 411. In the original version of Michelson’s essay, which appeared in *Film Culture* in 1966, she capitalizes the term: “Immanence.” (Annette Michelson, “Film and the Radical Aspiration,” *Film Culture* 42 [Fall 1966]: 37.)

recognition and alienation, in terms of the representation of both time and space, which constitutes immanence for Michelson.

Koch never cites Michelson's essays in his text—he merely refers to her by name—but he does mention “Film and the Radical Aspiration” in an earlier section of *Stargazer*. Furthermore, throughout his discussion of the concept in his book, he refers to “imminence,” not immanence.²³⁴ It is possible that the misuse of the word was a printing mistake in *Stargazer*, or that Koch simply used the wrong word while still understanding its meaning. (There is, in fact, a subheading in the OED entry for imminent called “Confused with IMMANENT.”) Certainly he seems to suggest immanence as Michelson defines it when he identifies it as an integration of conceptions of space and time: “the future within the present; the monstrous within the familiar; the fantastic within the real.” He surmises, “Possibly a similar concept presented itself to Warhol in *Lonesome Cowboys*. He might have made the overflowing narcissism of his men stand in relation to that hackneyed vocabulary of masculine presence and behavior promoted by the standard Western, and he might have vivified that possibility in a surreal display of past and present...But the idea doesn't work.”²³⁵

Although clearly Koch's discussion of Warhol's failure to achieve immanence in *Lonesome Cowboys* functions for the writer as another example of the film's overall failure, I happen to find Koch's evocation of immanence, and his description of what

²³⁴ Koch, *Stargazer*, 74. During this section of his book, Koch refers to “Film and the Radical Aspiration” by name when discussing 1960s film critics' tendencies to draw parallels between New York avant-garde film and Abstract Expressionism.

²³⁵ Koch, *Stargazer*, 108.

Lonesome Cowboys could have been, to be uncannily appropriate as a description of the film as I experience it. Throughout the film, *Lonesome Cowboys* does exactly what Koch claims it does not: it confuses temporal boundaries—not the future and present, but the past and present, which conforms exactly to Koch’s wish for “a surreal display of past and present,” and which also makes sense given that the genre Warhol is working with is defined by its 19th-century setting. The film also places fantastic, even monstrous and violent, events within a familiar and real context. Or to put it another way, as Peter Gidal writes in his own gloss of *Lonesome Cowboys*, “The most important aspect of the film is the consistent oneness of reality and fantasy.”²³⁶ The rape scene certainly functions this way: the ironic use of Western language and the violence of the rape, tempered by the comedy of Mead, as well as the references to the people outside of the frame, serve to disorient the spectator by infusing in the film itself a sort of straddling of reality (the experiences of the actors) and fantasy (the roles the actors take on as part of the premise of the film)—although neither one takes precedence over the other.

One of the other reasons why Koch dismisses *Lonesome Cowboys* as a failure hinges on what he calls “critical consciousness,” a sort of self-conscious deliberation over all the technical, stylistic, and formal aspects of the film, which he clearly believes Warhol lacks.²³⁷ Koch does not believe that Warhol made choices; he does not attribute

²³⁶ Peter Gidal, *Andy Warhol Films and Paintings: The Factory Years* (New York: De Capo Press, 1971), 124. As to Koch’s criticism that the narcissism of the characters does not play out directly in relationship to a “hackneyed vocabulary of masculine presence and behavior promoted by the standard Western,” I actually concur, but only because I do not necessarily agree that what the cowboys enact is overflowing narcissism.

²³⁷ It soon becomes clear that although Koch believes that Warhol’s “refusal of critical consciousness” has led to “the complete failure of *Lonesome Cowboys* as a work of art,” the film nevertheless retains

agency to Warhol as an auteur. As such, Warhol is unequipped to reveal what Koch calls the “*crises* of that imminence [sic],” the dialectical moment when the two “polarities of myth and fact” collide in a film with visual efficacy. For Koch, only a critically conscious director (Godard and Stanley Kubrick are his main examples here) can effect such a revelation.²³⁸ In fact, Warhol did indeed lack critical consciousness, at least as Koch conceives of it. As I have already discussed in my Introduction and in the previous two chapters, Warhol deliberately relinquished conventional directorial responsibilities through a number of different tactics, including encouraging his actors to improvise, giving them very few or simply banal verbal cues, and by employing what Parker Tyler has called “a studied inattentiveness to form.” Likewise, Douglas Crimp has made clear in his book on Warhol’s films that Warhol’s creative agency derived from his insistence on using other people’s ideas, and for being open to and permissive with the actors and other collaborators who worked on his films. Warhol’s directorial style, then, was based on a sort of negation of what Koch is calling critical consciousness; Warhol foregrounded the collaborative mechanism, actually inherent in almost all filmmaking, and made it a hallmark of his cinema. One result of this approach, evident in *Lonesome Cowboys* but in many other films as well, is an aesthetic and a formal structure based on letting everything in—on letting the camera run as actors fend for themselves and make their own way. And in *Lonesome Cowboys*, this method does result, I believe, in exactly the

important, because the same lack of critical consciousness that Warhol lacks in his capacity to make a film with artistic value has served him well to produce a piece of film that “manifests the same essential experience of the world that the film displays. A certain self-knowledge, energy, capacity to act, is *refused*.” (Koch, *Stargazer*, 108.)

²³⁸ Koch, *Stargazer*, 108.

sort of dialectical instances of immanence that Koch identifies in Godard's *Alphaville* and Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*. But these instances, rather than being orchestrated through montage, sound editing, or scripting, occur spontaneously and, perhaps, even imperceptibly to some spectators.

Based on Warhol's working methods that I have just described, discussions of *Lonesome Cowboys* as a parody become even more inadequate. Instead, it is more productive, I believe, to consider *Lonesome Cowboys* as a project that allows for an entirely new, and totally serious, reality—a space in which fantasy and reality are no longer distinct, and one which spreads beyond the territory captured by the lens of the camera. In this way, the participants involved in *Lonesome Cowboys* engage in what Ann Reynolds calls a “structure of creativity.” In her discussion of a film made by Dorothy Beskind in the late 1960s, which depicts the artists Eva Hesse and Ruth Vollmer in Hesse's studio, Reynolds points out the limitations to considering Beskind's film simply as a documentary of an artist's studio practice. As Reynolds explains, this type of movie had by the 1960s become a somewhat popular subgenre of documentary film, and Hesse and Vollmer are familiar enough with its conventions to play up to the camera:

And Hesse and Vollmer, to some extent, comply, in tune with the documentary rhetoric of the time; they know how to act like artists for the camera. But their self-consciousness also indicates that what they enact for each other and for the camera might also be a manifestation of something less conventionalized, both psychologically and socially, something I would like to call a “structure of creativity.” By using this term, I want to suggest Raymond Williams's concept of a “structure of feeling,” an emotional—and creative—presence that is something

practical, in action, and readable from inside a culture, but to which fixed forms, categories, or conventions ... do not speak at all.²³⁹

By describing *Lonesome Cowboys* in terms of a structure of creativity, the question of whether or not the film conforms to or subverts the Western genre becomes irrelevant. Perhaps a better question would be, How do Warhol and his collaborators use the Western genre to activate and transform their everyday lives? To answer this question, we must consider the film itself as something other than a discrete entity. If we want to understand *Lonesome Cowboys*' significance to the community that made it, we must understand it as inextricably linked to the time and place in which it was filmed, and consider its role as a catalyst for structures of creativity beyond the space captured by the lens of the camera. In other words, as Reynolds says of Beskind's film, "The filmmaker and her camera provide a framework within which the artists can make sense of their relationship and their work and present it to themselves and to each other; what Beskind's camera captures is secondary for them."²⁴⁰

* * *

Phillip French, in his 1973 book *Westerns: Aspects of a Movie Genre*, identifies "three cardinal aspects of the western," all of which contribute to his characterization of the Western as a genre with a distinctive style. First, he points out the Western's tendency to oversimplify complex political issues for the sake of a clear-cut dyadic opposition of good and evil. The second essential characteristic of the Western is its predisposition for

²³⁹ Ann Reynolds, "A Structure of Creativity," in *Ruth Vollmer 1961–1978: Thinking The Line*, ed. Nadja Rottner and Peter Weibel. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 55.

²⁴⁰ Reynolds, "A Structure of Creativity," 55. Reynolds recontextualizes Beskind's film by juxtaposing it with ideas put forth by Parker Tyler in *Underground Film*, in particular Tyler's analysis of Ken Jacobs and Jack Smith's *Blonde Cobra*. (Reynolds, "A Structure of Creativity," 53.)

a certain level of cinematic “virtuosity”; because of its fixed conventions, it becomes a platform for directors to experiment and to expand those conventions creatively. Third, French emphasizes “the problem of anachronism” in Westerns, by which he means that although a wealth of historical knowledge exists about the period during which most Westerns are set (roughly 1870–1890), Western films persist in including visual and historical elements that are of another place and time.²⁴¹

These stylistic tendencies in the Western result in a genre that is by definition self-contained and highly artificial. The Western, ultimately, does not mimic any actual historical truth—nor does it aspire to. The verisimilitude it employs is that defined by other Westerns. The genre conventions have been achieved by accretion—the gradual building up of character, setting, and plot that have very little analogous relationship to an actual West, either past or present. This characterization of the Western genre, far from being particular only to the Western, is actually true of most highly stylized Hollywood genres—science fiction and the gangster film are two other obvious examples. But for Warhol, the Western in particular seems to have been a favored genre. References to the Western genre appear, somewhat obliquely, in some of Warhol’s early silkscreen

²⁴¹ Philip French, *Westerns* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 2005), 26–29. Originally published as *Westerns: Aspects of a Movie Genre* (London: Secker and Warburg for the British Film Institute, 1973). Another historian of the Western genre, John G. Cawelti, also noticed the tendency toward anachronism in Western films, especially in terms of costume: “An important [costume] distinction marks off both hero and villain from the townspeople. The townspeople usually wear the ordinary street clothing associated with the later nineteenth century, suits for men and long dresses for women. On the whole this clothing is quite simple as compared to the more elaborate fashions of the period and this simplicity is one way of expressing the Westernness of the costume. However, in the midst of the desert, the townspeople’s clothing has an air of non-utilitarian artificiality somewhat like the ubiquitous false fronts of the town itself. It is perhaps significant that even in Westerns purportedly set at a later date the women tend to wear the full-length dresses of an earlier period.” (John G. Cawelti, “Savagery, Civilization and the Western Hero,” in *Focus on the Western*, ed. Jack Nachbar. [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974], 61.)

paintings. One of his earliest silkscreen series, the *Elvises* (1963), use as their source a still from Elvis Presley's 1960 Western film *Flaming Star*.²⁴² Another subject of several of Warhol's early paintings, Troy Donahue, appeared in several television Western series in the 1950s before he became a Hollywood movie star.

And of course, *Lonesome Cowboys* was not Warhol's first attempt to interpret the Western film genre. In 1965, he collaborated with Ronald Tavel, who wrote and essentially directed *Horse*, which was filmed in the 47th Street Factory and which featured a live, rented horse named Mighty Bird. As Douglas Crimp recounts, Tavel's conception and scripting of the film resulted in a "queer pastiche of the Hollywood Western":

Each of the four actors in *Horse* [Gregory Battcock, Larry Latreille, Tosh Carillo, ---] plays a stock Hollywood Western part: the Kid, the Sheriff, Tex, and Mex. Their lines as written in the screenplay, and sometimes as actually delivered in the film, are also Hollywood Western clichés: "Why, it's the kid!" "Your're a tinhorn," "There's gold in them thar hills," "Some day all this land is gonna be mighty fine cow country," and so forth. Interspersed with these are lines that spoof, or "queer," the genre, lines such as, "Take it off." "I'm a celibate," "I'm an onanist," "Beat it, beat it, beat it all day long."²⁴³

In addition to the use of Western clichés, there are other affinities between *Horse* and *Lonesome Cowboys*, in particular the instances of sadomasochistic activity in each film. In *Horse*, three of the cowboys attack Mex, played by Tosh Carillo, and their actions are similar to a rather intensive physical attack of Eric Emerson by Joe and Louis. And although *Horse* bears the indelible mark of Tavel's contributions to the film—notably the

²⁴² For an in-depth analysis of how Warhol's *Elvises* are locuses for Warhol's own desire, see Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, 150–153.

²⁴³ Douglas Crimp, "Coming Together to Stay Apart," in *"Our Kind of Movie" The Films of Andy Warhol* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 59.

scripting and the use of idiot cards to feed the actors their never-before-seen lines, which resulted in their particularly wooden delivery—both films rely on the unpreparedness of the actors to achieve what Crimp calls an “almost invisible difference between the actors’ playing roles and just playing around,” which is one of the defining characteristics of almost all of Warhol’s sound films.²⁴⁴

Likewise, both *Horse* and *Lonesome Cowboys* “spoof, or ‘queer’” the stereotypical gender roles, some of which result in latent homosexual content, present in many classic Westerns of the 1940s and 1950s. In the case of *Horse*, the actors’ spoofing of the genre serves to reinforce what Crimp identifies as an absence of relationality among the actors in the film: “The actors read lines, they perform actions, but even when the lines are said by one actor to another or when the actions involve interaction, each actor appears to inhabit his own world. Dialogue and interaction never constitute anything like recognizable intersubjectivity.”²⁴⁵ I believe that *Lonesome Cowboys* differs from *Horse* precisely because of the presence of the sort of intersubjectivity that Crimp accurately identifies as absent in that earlier film. Spoofing and parody are undeniably present in *Lonesome Cowboys*, but in terms of understanding how the film addresses relationality between the actors, spoofing is an inadequate descriptor. Unlike *Horse*, in which the actors’ detached delivery of clichéd Western dialogue serves to alienate the players from one another, in *Lonesome Cowboys* the tropes of the Western actually

²⁴⁴ Crimp, “Coming Together to Stay Apart,” 58.

²⁴⁵ Crimp, “Coming Together to Stay Apart,” 61–62.

provide the premises for establishing and revealing relationships between the actors. Such revelations never occur in the film that utilizes Tavel's scenario.

One example of how the actors' intimate relationships develop within *Lonesome Cowboys* occurs about halfway through the film, during a short scene featuring Viva and Eric, who are sitting alone in a patch of dusty brush on a sunny day at the ranch. Earlier in the film, during a long spate of nighttime dialogue between Eric and Joe, Eric had extolled the virtues of living a "lonesome" life out in the west, emphatically declaring that he didn't need any money because all he really needed was "a cock in my pants." The premise of the conversation seemed to be to sell Joe on the merits of a life out west as opposed to one "back east," from where Joe, as a newcomer to the group, had just arrived. Their scene ends abruptly with a cut almost immediately after Eric explains that Ramona, although she is a prostitute, will "make it" with the cowboys not for money, but "for the glory of the fuck," thus establishing her, at least within the stereotypical parlance of the standard Western, as a loose woman—one of the few roles available to women in the genre.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ Philip French explains, "In the model traditional western there are two kinds of women. On the one hand there is the unsullied pioneer heroine: virtuous wife, rancher's virginal daughter, schoolteacher, etc.; on the other hand there is the saloon girl with her entourage of dancers. The former are in short supply, to be treated with respect and protected. The latter are reasonably plentiful, sexually available and community property." (French, *Westerns*, 38.) Blake Lucas seeks to revise the implication, which it is possible to extrapolate from French's summation, that women in Westerns are helpless creatures with no agency or complexity. For Lucas, women in Westerns take on complex and myriad roles, many of which are empowering. (Blake Lucas, "Saloon Girls and Ranchers' Daughters: The Woman in the Western," in *The Western Reader*, ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. (New York: Limelight Editions, 1998), 301–320. For a summary of how the role of women in Westerns has shifted and grown more complicated over the decades during which the genre proliferated, see Jon Tuska, "Women," *The American West in Film: Critical Approaches to the Western* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 223–236. For an introductory summary of how issues of race and gender have been dealt with in Westerns and by contemporary film critics and scholars, see David Lusted, "The Revisionist Western," in *The Western* (New York: Pearson

The scene between Eric and Viva, then, reads ostensibly as a meeting between a woman of easy virtue and her cowboy john. The dialogue that ensues, however, conspicuously lacks the ironic use of Western clichés that have riddled so many of the other scenes up to this point. Almost immediately it becomes obvious that Viva and Eric know one another intimately. Their tone is playful and even tender at times but also frank and without pretense, and they address one another casually, as if this interaction is simply the next installment of an ongoing conversation. This scene, transcribed in full, includes my own descriptions of the camera work in italics:²⁴⁷

Tight close-up of Viva's face, which fills almost the entire frame. Part of Eric's curly hair is visible on screen right:

Viva

Well if you know if all the men told me were as sweet as you are and told me how beautiful my eyes are I probably would never wear eyelashes at all.

Eric

You have pierced ears huh?

Viva

Mm hmm

Longman, 2003), 231–271. Interestingly, “The Glory of the Fuck” is apparently a title that Warhol was considering for his film before settling on *Lonesome Cowboys*. In an article for the *Los Angeles Free Press*, Gene Youngblood quotes Warhol: “It’s based on Romeo and Juliet. If they won’t let us call it ‘The Glory of the Fuck’ I think we’ll call it ‘Cowboy Movie.’” (Gene Youngblood, “Superstars make super western,” *Los Angeles Free Press* 5, no. 190 [8–14 March 1968]: 1, 14.)

²⁴⁷ I have chosen to include the full transcription of the dialogue of this scene, as with all the following transcriptions, for a number of reasons. First, *Lonesome Cowboys* consists of extemporized dialogue between its actors, and as such, the film lacks a certain economy of language that scripted films often have. To cut this dialogue would have involved summarizing the exchange between Eric and Viva, which perhaps would have been shorter than the transcription, but would have been just as tedious to read, while also being less accurate since the subtleties of the dialogue would have been lost. The inclusion of the entire dialogue also insures that the reader has as much access to this scene as is possible without actually watching the film. Since many of Warhol’s films are not easily accessible (although *Lonesome Cowboys*, since it has been distributed on DVD in limited editions and regions, is more accessible than many other Warhol films), this inclusion of transcribed dialogue is an attempt to remedy impeded access to the films.

Eric
I have one myself.

Viva
I noticed.

Camera begins to pan slowly to the right, toward Eric's face, and pauses so that Viva and Eric's faces, which face one another, are visible on screen left and screen right.

Eric
You like that?

Viva
Why don't you have both?

Eric
Because the—I don't know.

Viva
Too feminine.

Eric
Yeah. I don't like being feminine. Too much anyway. I like being a little sweet.

Camera pans to the right to frame Eric's profile in tight close-up, which fills the frame.

Viva
Ahh.

Eric
It's called sensual. To me. It's not sweetness.

Viva
Are you Irish?

Eric
Mmm, yeah, in a way. Every St. Patrick's Day, I walk around with the Irish, and get drunk. So I have a little Irish in me, uh, and, I get in a lot of Irish.

Both laugh softly at Eric's joke, and the camera begins to pan slowly back to the left as they continue to talk.

You have pretty teeth, but there's no spaces.

Viva
What does that mean?

Eric
Oh there's fangs though like vampires.

Viva
Yeah right, right here.

The camera has panned left so that Viva's face occupies the entire frame. Viva points to her bicuspid with the finger of a hand that also holds a burning cigarette.

Eric
Yeah. I have the fangs and I have spaces also.

Viva
Let me see your fangs.

The camera pans back to the right and frames Eric's face and Viva's shoulder and hand. Eric bares his teeth and Viva touches them.

Viva
I don't see any fangs--

Eric bites her finger playfully

Oh that's just a little fang.

Eric
I'm a little fang! [chuckles] That's for a little bite.

Viva
Well do you want to—actually I always thought my fang was too big. Would you--

Eric
Oh no. I like it.

Viva
--a transplant? Would you like my fang?

Camera has panned left again to frame Viva's face, as well as a fragment of Eric's, on screen right.

Eric

Oh no. Oh no I like your fang. So I can see it. So I can think of how it would feel.

Viva bares her teeth and bites Eric on the chin several times. The camera captures both of their faces in a tight close-up.

Oh yeah. Right.

Eric moves as if to bite her back but Viva pulls away quickly.

Viva

How did it feel?

Eric

Good. It hurt.

They pause and look at one another.

Viva

Just give me a slight, a slight taste of your fang, now, don't make it hurt.

Eric opens his mouth and bites Viva on the jaw.

Ahhh... I can't feel the fang—Ow!

Viva pushes Eric abruptly away as he laughs softly. The camera cuts cleanly (no strobe) to a medium shot of them both waist-up with part of the brushy background visible screen right.

Eric

There? Did I hurt you?

Viva

You're always too rough. I mean, you're *so* rough, you talk sensu—how you're full of love and sensuality well you don't know the meaning of it.

Eric

Well I just can't help myself I just get all—

Viva

Well you have to think of the partner you have to tone it down.

Eric

I think of 'em so much that I can't hold myself in there.

Viva

Well ah—

Eric

See it's just that I'm so alone when it comes chance to be with somebody, it—

Viva

Learn how to hold—

The camera cuts cleanly again to a medium shot of Viva with her head in Eric's lap. (The camera may have moved slightly because on screen right is a view of a tree trunk that was not visible in the previous shot.) Viva and Eric have continued talking and the camera picks up on Eric mid-sentence.

Eric

--to be with one.

Viva

Well now that you're with one, relax. Just relax.

Eric

It's hard to relax.

Viva

Relax. Here I'll rub your neck.

Viva has raised her arm and begins massaging his neck.

Now, now think about something else. Think about ah, the April rose or the clouds or something, and just let the vibrations get in there, ya know, stop thinking about your prick all the time.

As Viva has been talking, the camera has zoomed in slowly to capture Viva's supine head in close-up, but some of Eric's torso and his face, as he leans down, is also visible.

Eric

I haven't ah, I don't try to do anything except kiss.

Viva

All right well, that's not what I've been exposed to, in your presence. Your presence has just exposed me. All you've done is rip off my clothes.

Eric leans over and kisses her on the mouth.

Eric

Then let me kiss you.

Viva

Let—well let me kiss you, you're complaining about, you want to be seduced by the woman. Let me kiss you again. Get your mouth down here. That's it...

Eric kisses her tentatively, rather awkwardly, on the mouth. The camera then zooms in to a tighter close-up of their faces. As they kiss, a voice, probably either Morrissey's or Warhol's, is audible offscreen saying "cut," but the camera continues filming. They kiss for a few seconds and then, as the camera slowly zooms out to a slightly wider shot, Eric pulls away.

Put your tongue back in. Stop digging me with your fingernails.

Eric pauses, and Viva continues mumbling to him inaudibly. He then puts his mouth on hers, but his head remains perfectly still as hers appears to move underneath his in the motion of a kiss. The camera then cuts cleanly to the same earlier medium shot of Eric and Viva by the tree, as Eric pulls away and sits upright.

Eric

I'm sorry, but I don't want to be a teacher. I want to be loved. I can't make it with you.

Eric stands up, and Viva lays flat on her back with her head on the ground.

I'm gonna go feed the chickens.

As Eric walks away, he grabs Viva's hand in a sort of farewell gesture.

Ciao. I gotta go.

The camera begins to zoom in, past Viva and into the background, as a distant offscreen voice, possibly Louis', yells "Eric!" loudly.

Viva

Have fun with the chickens!

The camera then cuts cleanly to the next scene.

Although there are references to other parts of the film in this scene, particularly Eric's role in Viva's rape when Viva mentions how Eric had ripped her clothes off earlier, the content of Viva and Eric's conversation also contains references that reach beyond the circumstances of the film. The blunt statements that Viva makes about Eric's personality seem to stem from having known him well before their time together in Tucson. Her characterization of him as somebody who projects sensitivity but who actually plays too rough suggests that she has spent enough time with him to recognize how the way he describes himself does not match up with his actions. Likewise, Viva's overbearing critique of Eric's kissing style is enough to make him not want to participate in their coupling any longer. On one level, this is a scene of failed sexual interaction, but it is also a representation of two people who know one another well enough to accept that they are simply incompatible with one another sexually, or at least are simply not in the mood for the other's game, but who are nevertheless comfortable enough to share close quarters, and to bite and kiss each other from time to time.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ My own interpretation here has been inextricable from my own understanding of Viva and Eric from watching several films in which they play prominent roles. Their interaction in the above scene in *Lonesome Cowboys* only serves to reinforce my own ideas of who they are as performers. Each dictates his or her relationality with whomever they are interacting. With Eric, it could be a woman, a man, or simply an imagined spectator (as in *Chelsea Girls*), but he almost always presents himself as a sensitive and generously loving person who is also unattainable. Viva also manages or at least attempts to keep her co-stars—especially her male ones but also, most notably, other strong leading ladies such as Brigid Berlin—under her control through tactics of hyperactive verbalization and searing, witty critiques of the other person. Jennifer Doyle's characterization of Viva in *Blue Movie* is fitting in this regard: throughout the film, Viva reinforces her control over the situation by directing the actions of Louis Waldron, especially during their sexual interactions. (Jennifer Doyle, "Between Friends," in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*, ed. George Haggerty and Molly McGarry. [Chicester: Wiley, 2008], 334–337, accessed 4 March 2013, <http://utxa.eblib.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=350877>.)

To be sure, the relationality I am referring to in the above example is still not the enactment of the normative interpersonal relationships that Hollywood genres like the Western rely upon for the progression and resolution of the plot. Crimp's summation of the role of typical conflict-resolution narratives in Warhol's films still applies to *Lonesome Cowboys*:

What we see in [Warhol's] films is that the normative concentration of our interest on the story, on the drama of human relationships, will get us nowhere, will result only in frustration. But as soon as we remove our attention from that story, as soon as we locate our interest in a world in which characters—other *people*—and their stories—of *relationships*—are only one element among countless others, we find unanticipated recompense in new pleasures of looking and new ways of being in the world.²⁴⁹

For the purposes of my analysis of *Lonesome Cowboys*, I would amend this statement of Crimp's slightly to say that as soon as we locate our interest in a world in which people and their stories of relationships are only one element among countless other *people and still more relationships*, we find unanticipated recompense in new pleasures of looking and new ways of being in the world—but *we as spectators never fully achieve access to the world of the films*. I mean to say that, unlike some of Warhol's earlier films in which technical factors (the entry onto the set of people not originally planned as part of the cast, the presence of an unlearned script as a strategy to disorient the actors, the relentless rolling of the entire length of the camera's film) discourage relationality between his actors as well as frustrate the expectations of audience members, the technical distractions in many of his later films, of which *Lonesome Cowboys* is exemplary, serve almost exclusively to disorient the spectators rather than the actors, and to place the

²⁴⁹ Crimp, "Coming Together to Stay Apart," 62–63.

audience decidedly on the outside of a structure in which the actors, more often than not, seem entirely comfortable to explore their relationships with one another—and even to absorb the tropes of a genre into their interactions and conversations.²⁵⁰

When he began making sound films in late 1964, Warhol had often relied, when not working with Tavel, on the improvisation of his actors to provide the dialogue in his films, which often consisted of two or three barely edited or entirely unedited reels of 16mm film, which were then spliced together to create the finished cut. Because Warhol usually refused to turn off the camera during filming, the actors were required to sustain their performance for the duration of the reels. But around 1967, Warhol started using editing more frequently, which often resulted in shorter takes, so the pressure placed on the actors by the relentlessness of the camera likely diminished as a result. In films like *Bike Boy* and *Nude Restaurant* (both 1967), Warhol began to use strobe cuts, turning the camera off and on periodically as the actors continued to perform. This technique, a sort of rudimentary editing, has the effect of interrupting the action or dialogue on the film, and the white flashes and slip of the soundtrack that occur onscreen during the cut are jarring and disorienting to the spectator, but probably had little to no effect on the actors' ability to continue performing. So in general, Warhol's disregard for a tight structural

²⁵⁰ My interpretation here is distinctly at odds with Jennifer Doyle's description and interpretation of the audience's experience of watching *Blue Movie*, which I discuss in Chapter 1. Doyle's analysis depends on the premise that the audience comes to an understanding that the camera is a surrogate of Warhol himself—that the relationship between Viva and the camera, which is made visible through Viva's own conversations with Warhol and her engagement with the camera's lens through a number of facial expressions, words and gestures, is actually a representation of her relationship with Warhol. While this may be valid for a film like *Blue Movie*, where Warhol was reportedly alone with Viva and Waldron inside an apartment for the duration of the filming, for *Lonesome Cowboys* and for many other films which utilized an ensemble cast and large crew—and possibly more than one camera—the camera lens as possessing an analogous relationship to the director becomes much less tenable. (Doyle, "Between Friends," 336.)

narrative, the improvisations, including the asides by actors conversing with people offscreen, and the seemingly random use of strobe cuts primarily end up disorienting the viewer rather than the actors, and discouraging her from reading the film as a linear narrative, even if the film employed typical genre conventions.²⁵¹ And it is these messy elements seeping into *Lonesome Cowboys*, which Koch equated with a total absence of formal control, that constitute the film's aesthetic and its immanence.

Although *Lonesome Cowboys* is legible as a film with a loose narrative structure and plot development, to sustain a reading of the film only in those terms would require quite a lot of effort on the part of the viewer, and as Crimp's conclusion about Warhol's films suggests, to do so would require that we as spectators bracket out much of what is valuable about the film itself. However, I do think it is important to acknowledge that the general narrative thrust of the plot was likely useful to the actors, if only to serve as a point of departure for their own improvisations. Although Morrissey's script did not make it to Arizona, he was present in Tucson throughout the filming of the movie, and from photographs and other films shot by bystanders who were present during the filming, it is obvious that he had a hand in directing the actors and most likely gave them prompts conforming somewhat to his ideas about the film's story. The circuitous narrative structure that is discernible in the final film is also most likely due to Morrissey's directorial role: The gay cowboy brothers encounter Viva, the owner of a brothel, after they ride into town. The cowboys have a new addition to their gang—young Tom, whose presence upsets the group's hierarchy, which is based on the sexual

²⁵¹ Conversations with people offscreen is typical as well for the Tavel films.

favoritism of the gang's leader, Mickey. After the cowboys sexually attack Viva, the group's already tenuous allegiances begin to crumble. Joe, one of the youngest of the group, begins to cavort with the sheriff, who moonlights at Ramona's brothel as a prostitute in Native American drag. Joe's deviant behavior drives another wedge between the brothers, and eventually the cowboy family dissolves. Viva performs a ritualistic suicide aided by Mead, who feeds her "a leaf some death person took." Viva entreaties Tom to join her, but he refuses. (As she enacts the throes of death by poison, a voice offscreen, probably Morrissey's whispers instructions for her to "be less dramatic.") Tom and Eric Emerson then ride away together with plans to take up surfing in California.

The plot I have just described forms a sort of modular skeletal structure, a scaffolding off of which many other scenes and interactions between cast members hang. Some of the scenes in the film have little or nothing to do with the general story, and some, such as the conversation between Viva and Eric I discussed above, contradict the integrity of the narrative as a doomed love story between Viva and Tom. However, there are other parts of the film that adhere to the plot, and the actors exploit its constraints to explore their own ideas about how the Western might help them to circumscribe their relationships with one another, as well as with the world around them. Exemplary of this tactic is a longer sequence in the film that also serves to drive forward the ostensible plot. After her rape by the cowboys, Viva approaches the sheriff, played by Francis Francine, most well known for his role as a drag vampire in Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*, although here he plays, at least initially, a somber and rather stern sheriff in a cowboy hat and denim shirt, complete with a sheriff's badge. Viva demands that he take action

against the gang who raped her. Francine attempts repeatedly to give her the brush-off: he has too many other crime concerns like cattle rustling and stagecoach robbing, he is not equipped to investigate a sexual assault, her rape is not a fiscal priority. Viva counters this last with the question, “What’s more important, your money or my hymen?” and stalks off, explaining that she is going to see someone named Dr. Yokahama, since he won’t help her. After Viva leaves, the camera remains trained on the sheriff as he walks back and forth, presumably wrestling with the dilemma of whether or not to confront the cowboys. As he paces, we hear a voice offscreen, barely audible, saying something about yogurt. Francine says to no one in particular, “I guess that’s very good, yogurt in the desert. But who ate the cactus without the flowers?”

After this, the film immediately cuts to the next scene, which confirms that Francine does indeed attempt to confront the cowboys about the rape. The camera fixes on a head and shoulders shot of a young cowboy played by Julian Burroughs, although he is never referred to by name in this scene. Wearing a cowboy hat and a fleece-lined denim jacket, he stands in front of a fence, and although it is not clear at first to whom he is speaking, he explains that he would like to avoid further conflict:

Head and shoulders shot of Julian Burroughs

Julian

...this thing cause I’m trying to uh... if we can keep this from developing into a shootout I’d like to, I’d like to have that.

Voice offscreen

Uh huh.

Julian

Cause uh, my brothers are pretty hot-tempered, but they've been riding on the range for quite a while. Now as far as I see the problem is, you've accused us or you, we've been accused of, ah, of rape. Is that correct?

Voice offscreen

That's right.

Julian

Well it wasn't us who really caused that, it was this boy Julian who incited everyone to it. Now it seems to me that if you get rid of him, you'd solve the problem.

As Burroughs is speaking the lines above, the legs and bottom hem of Joe Dallesandro's jacket appear behind him as Joe walks over the low fence and steps across the frame.

Voice (which identifies itself as the sheriff)

Well you've gotta understand, being a marshall is not an easy thing. After all, ah, you come into town, bringing the, the person with you, we feel it, it's only right that you tell him yourselves to leave.

Julian

Well he won't leave, he wants to stay around, he's in love with my older brother...

The camera pans to Francine's reaction, and it's now obvious that Joe has come in and is standing behind the sheriff, listening to this whole exchange.

...and that's bad for, that's bad for Mickey and that's bad for this young boy. He's ah, we just picked him up on the trail, he's probably a, uh, a drifter, and uh, what he needs to be is to be sent back to his home. And he can't come into our family and disrupt our family life.

The camera pans slowly back to Julian

Francine

Well I mean after all you've gotta understand one thing too. You brought him here, I'm a sheriff I have a community to uphold, I have plenty of jobs to do.

Here the camera zooms out and all 3 people are visible from waist up, though the sheriff is obstructing a clear shot of Joe.

Julian

But you're the—

Francine

I cannot just take one person, who ah, entered the town with you, and bodily throw him out, and let you, ah, uh, continue on as if it hadn't happened, I mean after all there is ah, obligations I have to look out for myself.

Strobe cut to head and shoulders shot of Julian, whose tone becomes slightly impatient

Julian

You're the voice of authority here.

Francine

Well, as a sheriff I have a—

Strobe cut to head and shoulders shot of Francine

—for the people as well as myself.

Strobe cut to Julian

Julian

This boy's not going to leave ah, voluntarily you're going to have to ride him out of town.

Strobe cut to Francine

Francine

Well you've gotta understand one thing too—it's easy for you to say you have no spine. I've been around here for a long time, I've had no complaints until you come into town.

Julian

What do you mean you [*strobe cut, though camera remains on Julian*] the James brothers were here right before we were and we heard what they did to your town, they put you in a, in a bag and uh, threw you in the river.

Strobe cut to Francine

Francine

They may have done exactly as you say, but after all ah, had to do the best I could under the circumstances, I'm doing the same thing now.

While the sheriff is speaking, we can see Joe, sort of scowling, his face just above the sheriff's shoulder, and he goes "He's a (something unintelligible)" and nods his head.

Julian

Well I'm just saying, if you don't run the boy out of town he's not going to be run out. We're not, we can't run him out because, ah, I'm telling you this confidentially.

Francine

I don't see why you can't run him out—

Julian

If my older brother if my older brother heard about this he'd have me run out of town, but I say the point is if you want to stop this, problem, you're going to have to get rid of the boy Julian, because it looks like Ramona's been enticing him over and over and over again.

Series of quick strobe cuts as the group breaks up.

Throughout this scene, the actors perform their own rendition of Western genre conventions, including character archetypes (marshall as protector of community, cowboy trying to preserve male camaraderie) and stereotypical language (avoiding a shootout, riding the range, run out of town), and even their references to actual historical figures (the James brothers). But perhaps the most striking aspect of this scene is the matter-of-fact manner in which Julian explains Tom's attachment to Mickey and the potential damage to the cowboy family that would be the inevitable consequence of expelling Tom without the aid of the sheriff. The homosexual content of the typical Hollywood Western, often suggested but never explicit, is here almost taken for granted and integrated into the narrative's theme of the preeminence of family. The result of this exchange is therefore an almost offhand and totally cohesive idea of the family, which by default contradicts a heteronormative definition of family.

The camera work in this sequence is also highly controlled. Slow pans focus alternately on Francine and Burroughs as they debate about who should be responsible

for kicking Tom out of town, so the reaction of each man is visible as the other explains his position. Although the use of strobe cuts periodically interrupts the dialogue, their use is not random; they only begin as Burroughs' tone shifts to impatience, effecting a conventional shot-counter-shot pattern, which heightens the intensity of the exchange. This obvious mimicry of a basic cinematic device, but through the use of strobe cuts which also interrupt the seamlessness of the editing, is a prime example of how Warhol refuses to allow the viewer to watch this film as a passive spectator, yet still preserves the execution of this scene as part of a seemingly conventional narrative. One might even argue that his implementation of the shot-counter-shot strobe cuts exemplifies a sort of virtuosity—an almost instinctive and spontaneous mimicking of a standard Hollywood technique while simultaneously drawing attention to its artificiality as a device to frame the dialogue of the actors. This strategy aligns him more with avant-garde filmmakers of the 1960s, such as Godard, who as Michelson and Koch point out, employs such techniques in his genre-subverting *Alphaville*.

Immediately after a series of quick strobe cuts breaks up the scene between Burroughs and the sheriff, the film continues with a dialogue between Burroughs and Dallesandro, who has been listening during most of the previous conversation. At this point, Julian's awareness of his own place and time within the film approaches what I would call, borrowing from Koch, "a surreal display of past and present":

Close-up of Joe's face

Julian

What do you think about what I said to the sheriff does it make any sense?

Joe

I think so, I think the sheriff's a spineless mother.

Julian

Well he's ah, but he's the only one who can do it cause ah, little Julian won't leave us alone I mean, he's ah, he's picked us up on the trail and he's been with us ever since. I tried to get you boys to settle down a ranch house some place--

Camera slowly pans right, then zooms out to a medium shot of both Joe and Julian

Joe

I get what you wanna do man I wanna do the same thing you wanna do. I wanna get a home get married, get some children all that but... I don't know I mean, leave it up to the other people too I mean you can't make up their minds too.

Julian

No but someone's gotta—it seems to me that Mickey isn't making the decisions that he used to make.

Joe

Well let's leave Mickey.

Julian

Leave Mickey? Well no ah, how can you do that?

Camera slowly pans right, then zooms in to a close-up shot of Julian

Joe

That's easy enough. I'm gonna.

Julian

I haven't had my hair done and uh, you know we haven't been able to ride, we've been sleeping out in the goddamn rocks and ah, I'm getting tired of this life, uh, I'm too old for this.

Joe

Well, I'm just beginning but...seeing my brothers and how disgusted they are, I couldn't take it myself I don't wanna grow up like that.

Julian

It's, it's tearing us apart. I've been saying that for the last couple days. This girl Ramona, she's ah... we don't commit rape, we, what happened to us we were like animals.

Joe
Why?

Camera zooms out, pans left and then zooms in to a close-up shot of Joe's face

Julian
Jumping on that poor girl I mean she's ah—

Joe
Aw, man we weren't animals.

Julian
We were like beasts I never I mean I lost control I mean I was slobbering like a horse with a, with the ah horse with a mouth disease.

Camera zooms in slightly tighter on Joe's face

Joe
It was fun, man—we're out for fun aren't we?

Julian
We're not out to raise hell, we're out to raise children, lead decent lives, and settle down into a town and build it into a city and... be ready for World War One. I don't know Joe, you're the only one I can seem to make any sense with anymore.

Camera zooms out to a medium shot of Joe and Julian

Joe
I understand you, you know, I'm all for what you wanna do too but, like I say I don't wanna... make up Mickey's mind, I don't wanna, you know, tell any of 'em what to do and as far as Julian's concerned you know, I mean, if Julian digs Mickey, let him you know, make it with him. Fuck it, I don't give a damn.

A series of quick strobe cuts show some movement and when the film resumes, the cowboys have switched places so that Joe is now on the left.

Joe
I think we should leave him. Jesus. If you don't wanna leave I'm gonna leave him. I've had it with him.

Camera wavers, panning back and forth slightly but still keeping Joe in the frame

Julian

You're gonna ride out on your own?

Joe

That's right. Take off.

Julian

[unintelligible] You're the youngest that's all you're not gonna be the first to leave. Are ya?

Joe

I don't even want to hear it, Jesus. I just wanta get outta here.

Joe begins to pace restlessly; the camera follows him in a tight close-up, back and forth

Julian

Well I hate to see the family come apart you know how I felt, Ma since Ma died she told me to take care of you guys.

Joe walks away. The camera, still in a tight shot, catches Joe's arm as he waves off cowboy and then his shoulder as he walks away. Then camera pans back to Julian's head and shoulders. Julian faces the camera directly.

Julian

Families are breaking up these days ladies and gentlemen, because of the simple reason that children with ah, ah, are learning too soon how to, ah...they're, they're getting their own horses too soon, they're riding out on the range on their own now ah, we need a little ah, parental discipline and authority for ah, if we could only, well my mom and dad were of course butchered by the Apaches out at North Bend but, if we could get a few people around who would care, and a big brother somewhere that would ah, help us out, those of us who have been orphaned and left alone we would be, we would be happier children.

With this scene, Julian manages to embody what seems to be his own idea of what constitutes a cowboy: a strong sense of morality, a yearning for something civilized, and the impossibility of fulfilling that desire under his present circumstances—namely the untamed setting of the 19th-century frontier and its general lawlessness. He laments the eroding integrity of younger generations, and expresses shame in having acted like an animal by attacking Viva. Yet we cannot mistake his hopes for a family and to build a

civilization and wait for World War One as sincere. Through his language, Julian foregrounds the anachronistic artifice of his entire character; he plays an outmoded, even fantastical version a cowboy—a character which he created through his own understanding of the Western genre and its relationship to American history, as presented in movies and television. And yet, to label this performance as a spoof is inadequate, because although Julian and Joe's characters are improvisatory and their costumes are slipshod—Joe's black-and-white patterned jacket and bright red scarf read as a hasty thrift store purchase meant to refer vaguely to western wear—the effect of the acting itself is not comedic. Unlike the spoofing in *Horse*, which relies on the clichés of Tavel's script and the wooden acting of the stars, Joe truly seems to get angry at the prospect of leaving the group. Julian appears to express actual remorse at having been involved with Viva's rape.

Based on my above discussion of the scenes between Francine and Julian and Joe and Julian, it is clear that the actors in *Lonesome Cowboys* are playing out their own versions of what they believe a Western movie is, and their improvised characters are manifestations of their own internalizations of that genre. How, then, did they come to internalize it to such an extent that they were able to enact these stereotypical mannerisms so effortlessly, and with such emotional investment? One major reason is because the Western genre is arguably the most recognizable American myth manufactured by Hollywood, comparable in that regard perhaps only to the gangster film. And in 1967, when Warhol filmed *Lonesome Cowboys*, the Western genre was still very much alive in Hollywood, even though the production rate of Westerns in film and television had

declined markedly since their heyday in the 1940s and 1950s. Furthermore, the romantic idea of the Western experienced a backlash beginning in the early 1960s, as cynicism about the United States' status as a heroic world power began to ebb in the face of the Cold War, and later with the onset of the Vietnam conflict.²⁵²

Although Hollywood had become less interested in manufacturing typical Westerns by the 1960s, during that decade the sanctity of the Western hero as an allegory for the heroism of an American political agenda manifested itself in the attitudes of a generation of young men in the 1960s. J. Hoberman, in an essay on the trajectory of the Western genre in the twentieth century, explains:

As many have observed, the men who fought in Vietnam were raised on Westerns—presented with cap-firing six-guns and Davy Crockett coonskin caps and deposited at Saturday matinees to watch the adventures of Hopalong Cassidy and Gene Autry. The average recruit had entered his teens at a time when eight of the top prime TV shows were Westerns. Small wonder that John Wayne, the greatest of movie cowboys, became a talisman for a substantial number of American soldiers in Vietnam ... in the actual Vietnam, where dangerous areas were known as “Indian country,” Vietnamese scouts were termed “Kit Carsons” and Americans painted the slogan “The Only Good Gook Is a Dead Gook” on their flak jackets. There is a celebrated passage in Michael Herr’s book *Dispatches* in which a combat reporter is invited out on a search-and-destroy mission against the Viet Cong: “‘Come on,’ the captain said, ‘we’ll take you out to play Cowboys and Indians.’”²⁵³

²⁵² See Andre Bazin, “The Evolution of the Western,” in *The Western Reader*, ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman (New York: Limelight Editions, 1998), 49–56; and J. Hoberman, “How the Western Was Lost,” in *The Western Reader*, 85–92. David Lusted’s book *The Western* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2003) contains an in-depth chronological account of changing trends the Western, from the late-19th-century Western novel to films in the 1990s. Lusted discusses all of these trends in relationship to cultural and political factors, and offers a broad overview of how scholars have used Western films in a number of disciplines, especially in terms of American studies, cultural studies and gender studies. *The Western* also contains a lengthy annotated bibliography of other canonical histories of the Western.

²⁵³ Hoberman, “How the Western Was Lost,” 87–88.

According to Hoberman, the Western hero functioned as a positive inspiration for soldiers who fought overseas against the North Vietnamese. American soldiers called forth their own internalized understanding of the Western to transform their orders into theatrical and morally sound missions—perhaps even to ascribe a quasi-fictional or playful tone to a job that might otherwise have been unbearable. As I posited above, one of the functions of *Lonesome Cowboys* is that its production allowed Warhol and his crew to go out west to play out a fantastical idea of life on a frontier unfettered by social constraints. In short, Warhol's group went out west to create a world in which their own conceptions of the conventions of the Hollywood Western could actually exist as everyday life, but for reasons that are actually opposed to the heroic function of the Western for contemporary American soldiers as Hoberman describes them.

Julian Burroughs, as it happens, was a draft dodger, according to Steven Watson, who provides a brief biography of Burroughs in his book *Factory Made*. Burroughs' real name was actually Andrew Dungan, and he went AWOL in June 1967 by failing to return to duty after his military training, which he had begun nine months earlier, when he was drafted. He chose his alias because he admired William Burroughs, and after taking up with Warhol's crowd when Morrissey cast him in *Nude Restaurant* (Morrissey apparently had been struck by an antiwar button that Burroughs was wearing), he claimed to be William Burroughs' son, and decided that insinuating himself as a member of Warhol's Factory would be the perfect way to hide his actual identity.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁴ Watson, *Factory Made*, 346-348.

Watson says of Burroughs' appearance in *Nude Restaurant*, "On film Julian Burroughs delivers an earnest diatribe against the Vietnam War. Its presence in a sexploitation movie suggests the anomalous place of politics at the Factory."²⁵⁵ I would argue that politics were not anomalous at all in the films made by Warhol's Factory; rather, politics simply does not fit in terms of the conventional expectations of certain spectators of Warhol's films. In *Lonesome Cowboys*, the actors do not invoke politics to incite activism; nobody involved in the film operated under the assumption that what they were doing would change the rest of the world. But the film is nevertheless political, because the actors and the crew effectively transform and tailor their own relationship to the world around them to effect their version of the lifestyle of the Western genre, on camera and off. Burroughs' own refusal to participate in the Vietnam War, his fashioning of a new identity to avoid legal repercussions, and his entry into an environment in which he could express on film his frustration with the state of contemporary American culture in the guise of a disillusioned cowboy, are nothing if not political.

* * *

During the week or so that *Lonesome Cowboys* was in production, a number of local residents trained their own film cameras on Warhol's gang, and consequently, two films exist that take Warhol's film project as their subject. One of them, entitled *Warhol Out West*, was shot in 8mm and edited by a group of local artists and art students from the University of Arizona. The film, which is silent, contains additional viewpoints of many of the scenes that take place in *Lonesome Cowboys*, including shots of the crowds

²⁵⁵ Watson, *Factory Made*, 348.

who gathered to watch Warhol and his crew film in Old Tucson and at Rancho Linda Vista. In one sequence of *Warhol Out West*, we see what amounts to outtakes of the scene between Viva and Francine, in which she urges him to take action and punish the men who raped her. We see a long shot of Taylor, Viva, and Francine in front a large, red barn-like building (this building appears in several shots of *Lonesome Cowboys* as well). Francine is in his sheriff costume, wielding a rifle, as Mead, who is on the upper floor of the building, dangles a long length of hose from the window. Viva, standing outside underneath that window, catches the hose and, inexplicably, raises its end to her mouth. The film then cuts to Taylor Mead, walking beside a fence, holding a bowl and another small container. Viva walks into the frame, Taylor hands her the bowl, and she starts eating a white, gelatinous substance: yogurt [figure 10].

Remember that in *Lonesome Cowboys*, at the end of the scene between Francine and Burroughs that I described above, at a point when no action is taking place, we hear a non-diegetic voice mention yogurt. Viva then walks out of the frame, and Francine says, “I guess that’s very good, yogurt in the desert. But who ate the cactus without the flowers?” This bit of dialogue could have been overlooked by a large number of spectators watching this film in commercial movie theaters during the time of its initial release in 1968. If they had noticed it, it would have appeared as just another non sequitur in an already disjointed film. Depending on their own backgrounds as film viewers, this distraction, if noticed, could either have been interesting or frustrating—possibly both. Yet Warhol decided to include this banal reference to actions beyond the frame in the

film itself.²⁵⁶ Like Viva's reference to children after the rape scene, this seemingly ridiculous and fleeting non sequitur functions as a sort of two-way street in *Lonesome Cowboys*. It is one of many reminders in the film that the action on the screen is only one part of a much larger world that provided a context for the film's participants to experiment with the tropes and mannerisms of the Western movie genre. And the minor details that appear in the finished film, such as a random reference to yogurt, point to how much the distinction between the action onscreen and off is actually of little or no consequence for the actors and most of the onlookers present during the filming. For the actors in the film, the lines they speak or the scenes they play out which serve the loosely structured plot are no more privileged than the conversations or activities they take part in away from the lens of the camera. Freed from constraints caused by technical factors such as the requirement to perform continuously for the entire length of a film reel, they move between the two realms, between on camera and off, fluidly, with no break in the continuity between acting and their everyday lives.

Throughout this chapter, I have suggested how *Lonesome Cowboys* defies simplistic categorization—either as a Western or as a spoof, or even as an example of

²⁵⁶ In *POPism* Warhol describes his own process of editing *Lonesome Cowboys*. He claims to have finished the final cut while recovering from his gunshot wound in summer 1968: "When I was up and padding around the house, I had all the footage from *Lonesome Cowboys* brought over from the Factory; hours and hours of one-of-a-kind scenes. I worked with just a projector and a splicer, chopping whole blocks of it here and there to cut it down to a standard two-hour running time." (Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 284.) David Bourdon corroborates Warhol's story, and adds that Jed Johnson, Warhol's partner at the time, assisted Warhol with the editing since Warhol was still infirm. According to Bourdon, the editing took place mostly on the floor in the front room of Warhol's Lexington Avenue townhouse. (David Bourdon, *Warhol* [New York: Abrams, 1985], 292.)

Warhol's role as an auteur director.²⁵⁷ Warhol and his collaborators treated filmmaking as more than just a means to produce an autonomous and freestanding film. Instead, their practice seems to align with a broader conception of cinema—as a system that includes a film's conception, production, distribution, and reception over time. Cinema, in this sense, includes a variety of experiences for those making a film, those watching the making of a film, and its different audiences over time. Warhol and his collaborators' structuring of their lives according to the cinematic apparatus ignites a potential for a radical politics—be it sexual politics, the politics of identity, or a politics of the imagination. Perhaps what happens after *Lonesome Cowboys* completed filming illustrates this best. The last scene of the film depicts Eric and Tom, who have finally decided to leave their cowboy family. With a final anachronistic flourish, the two men ride away from the ranch on their horses, with plans to take up surfing in California. Warhol's next film after *Lonesome Cowboys* was in fact *San Diego Surf*, which takes place on a beachfront property in La Jolla, California. The cast includes many of the same actors who worked on *Lonesome Cowboys*—Eric, Tom, Taylor Mead, Viva, and Louis Waldron. The premise of *San Diego Surf* is similar to *Lonesome Cowboys* in that it involves the invasion of Viva's property by a group of young men, this time rowdy surfers who have overstayed their welcome at her beach house. Although the film was

²⁵⁷ I have concentrated on the plotline that focuses on Viva's rape, rather than some rather lengthy segments of the film that fall outside this narrative trajectory, such as an extended and intimate conversation between Viva and Eric, and a raucous party scene that involves Francis Francine dressing in drag as a Native American girl, under the premise that Viva has procured him a "date" that requires this costume change. There are many different parts during the film that are highly comical, and decidedly queer, and I do not mean to give short shrift to those scenes—they are integral to the overall film, but simply have not found a place in the overall agenda of my argument here.

never edited in Warhol's lifetime (his shooting by Valarie Solanis in June 1968 curtailed his filmmaking practice), it is, like *Lonesome Cowboys*, an example of how the barriers between the action onscreen and off are fluid and imbricated. As Viva says during a scene from *San Diego Surf*, "I can't tell the difference anymore between shooting and not shooting and, you know, between reality and fantasy."²⁵⁸

As I said earlier, I believe that Warhol's cinema demonstrates, contrary to Koch's assertion, immanence—the presence of the fantastic within the real. In a short essay on André Breton, Michelson contrasts immanence, the presence of the divine within the material world, with a transcendence beyond the confines of materiality, and she qualifies immanence as specifically surrealist: "Surrealist thinking is haunted by demons and old ghosts such as a 'transcendence,' subjected periodically to rituals of exorcism, but never quite dispelled. Surrealist 'immanence,' is, in fact, and more than most, a 'transcendence' in disguise. Or one might say that it is, under periodical stress, renewed, like a fissure in a wall, and that through the crack stream avatars of theory, art and action."²⁵⁹ *Lonesome Cowboys* is, quite possibly, a film in which a spectator, who is willing to see beyond the limits of parody and to embrace the ostensible disjunctures of Warhol's aesthetic, might be able to detect "fissures in a wall"—those places in the film which, as they point outside the frame and into the world around it, also point to a way of being in the world that, quite simply, can transform a site into a space of "theory, art and action." Within this

²⁵⁸ *San Diego Surf*, shot in 1968, VHS transfer screened at the Andy Warhol Museum, 2009. This film was apparently not edited until the mid-1990s by Paul Morrissey. (Conversation with Greg Pierce, Film curator, The Andy Warhol Museum, fall 2008.)

²⁵⁹ Annette Michelson, "Surrealism: the Peripeties of a Metaphor, or A Journey Through Impossibility," *Artforum*, 5, no. 1 (September 1966): 73.

paradigm, the question of whether or not *Lonesome Cowboys*—or any of Warhol’s films, from his silent films to his later “sexploitation” movies—conforms to or correctly subverts genre conventions becomes irrelevant. A project like the one that produced *Lonesome Cowboys*, as well as its critical reception, underscores how much we as viewers attuned to the conventions of Hollywood have been conditioned to think that genre or narrative provides the fundamental structure of any film. Warhol and his collaborators, although aware of the conventions of genre and narrative, utilized them as a point of departure when acting in films—and as a point of entry when employing the filmmaking process to activate their lives and the material world around them. By extension, we, as spectators, are also free to use the films to come to a greater understanding of how we relate with one another and with our world now, in the present.

Appendix A: Figures



Figure 1. John Palmer, Cathy James, Ronna Page, Gerard Malanga, Marisa Berenson, Donovan Leitch (hidden), Edie Sedgwick. In *The Factory Years: Warhol's Factory 1965–67*, 139. Photograph by Stephen Shore.



Figure 2. Florine Stettinheimer. *The Cathedrals of Art*, 1942. Oil on canvas, 60 1/4 x 50 1/4 inches. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

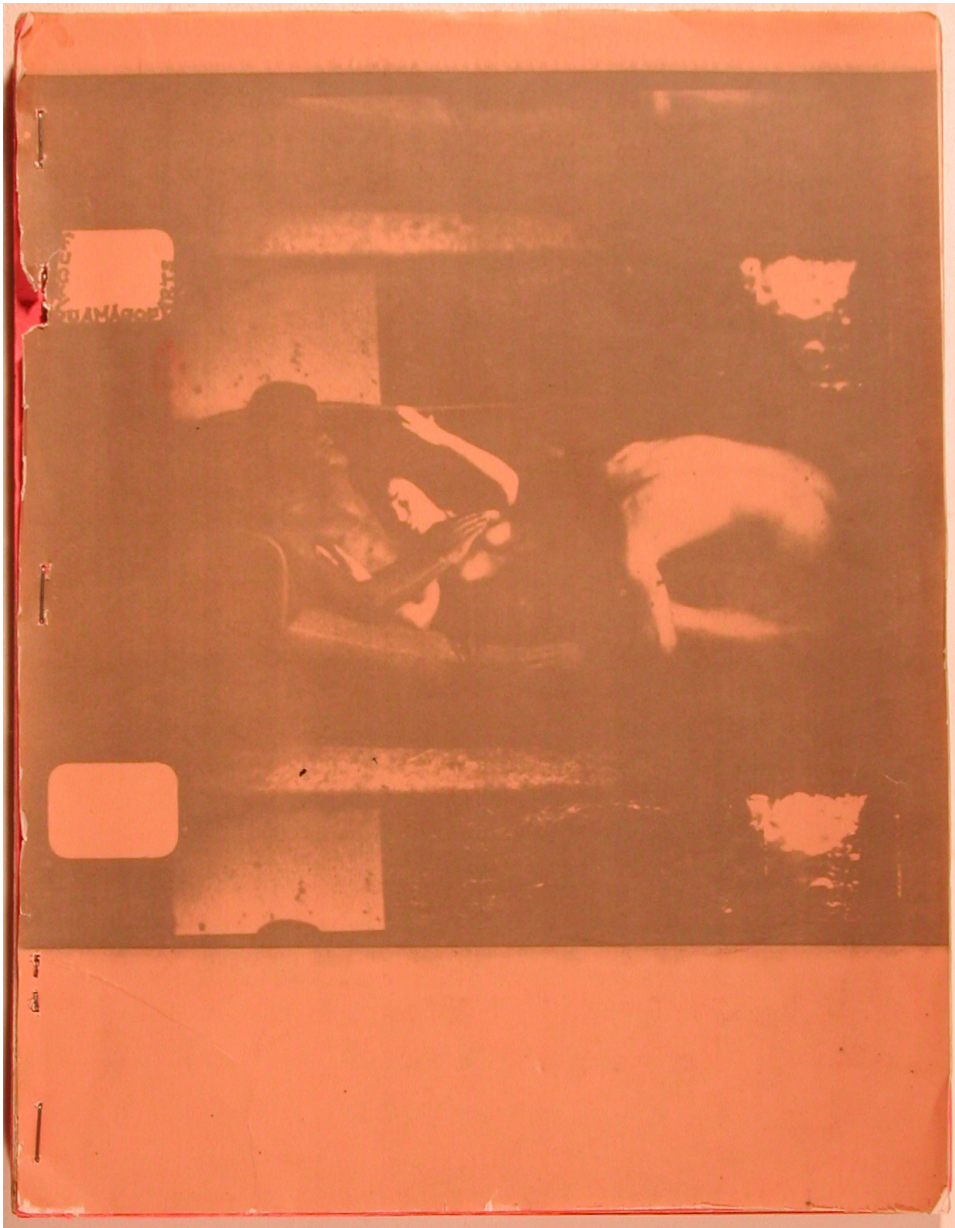


Figure 3. Cover of *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts* 8, no. 5 (February 1965), featuring a still of Andy Warhol's film *Couch* (1964). Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

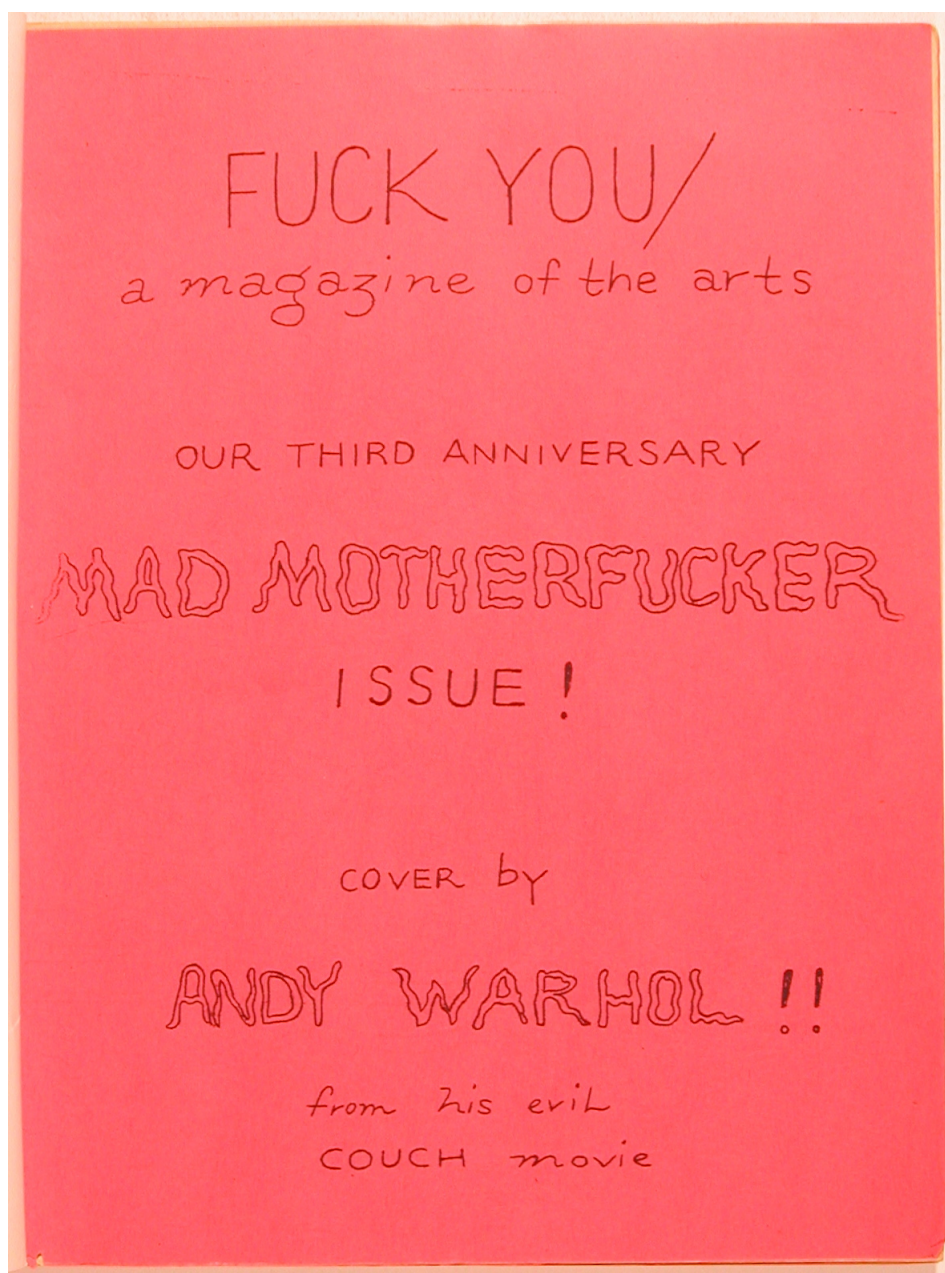
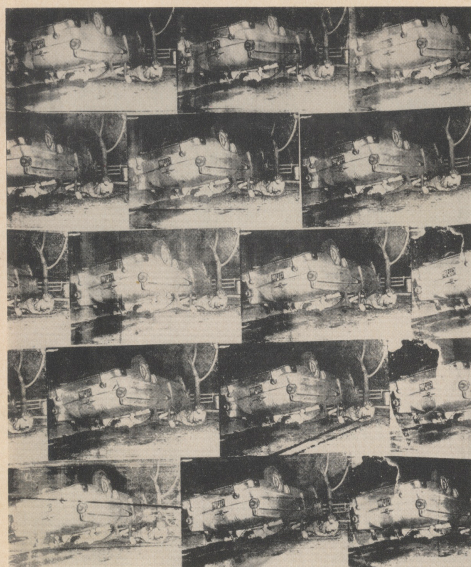


Figure 4. Title page of *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts* 8, no. 5 (February 1965). Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.



Andy Warhol: *Black and White Disaster, 4*, 1963, 82 inches high.
Stable Gallery

Andy Warhol

Someone said that Brecht wanted everybody to think alike. I want everybody to think alike. But Brecht wanted to do it through Communism, in a way. Russia is doing it under government. It's happening here all by itself without being under a strict government; so if it's working without trying, why can't it work without being Communist? Everybody looks alike and acts alike, and we're getting more and more that way.

I think everybody should be a machine.

I think everybody should like everybody.

Is that what Pop Art is all about?

Yes. It's liking things.

And liking things is like being a machine?

Yes, because you do the same thing every time. You do it over and over again.

And you approve of that?

Yes, because it's all fantasy. It's hard to be creative and it's also hard not to think what you do is creative or hard not to be called creative because everybody is always talking about that and individuality. Everybody's always being creative. And it's so funny when you say things aren't, like the shoe I would draw for an advertisement was called a "creation" but the drawing of it was not. But I guess I believe in both ways. All these people who aren't very good should be really good. Everybody is too good now, really. Like, how many actors are there? There are millions

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of actors. They're all pretty good. And how many painters are there? Millions of painters and all pretty good. How can you say one style is better than another? You ought to be able to be an Abstract-Expressionist next week, or a Pop artist, or a realist, without feeling you've given up something. I think the artists who aren't very good should become like everybody else so that people would like things that aren't very good. It's already happening. All you have to do is read the magazines and the catalogues. It's this style or that style, this or that image of man—but that really doesn't make any difference. Some artists get left out that way, and why should they?

Is Pop Art a fad?

Yes, it's a fad, but I don't see what difference it makes. I just heard a rumor that G. quit working, that she's given up art altogether. And everyone is saying how awful it is that A. gave up his style and is doing it in a different way. I don't think so at all. If an artist can't do any more, then he should just quit; and an artist ought to be able to change his style without feeling bad. I heard that Lichtenstein said he might not be painting comic strips a year or two from now—I think that would be so great, to be able to change styles. And I think that's what's going to happen, that's going to be the whole new scene. That's probably one reason I'm using silk screens now. I think somebody should be able to do all my paintings for me. I haven't been able to make every image clear and simple and the same as the first one. I think it would be so great if more people took up silk screens so that no one would know whether my picture was mine or somebody else's.

It would turn art history upside down?

Yes.

Is that your aim?

No. The reason I'm painting this way is that I want to be a machine, and I feel that whatever I do and do machine-like is what I want to do.

Was commercial art more machine-like?

No, it wasn't. I was getting paid for it, and did anything they told me to do. If they told me to draw a shoe, I'd do it, and if they told me to correct it, I would—I'd do anything they told me to do, correct it and do it right. I'd have to invent and now I don't; after all that "correction," those commercial drawings would have feelings, they would have a style. The attitude of those who hired me had feeling or something to it; they knew what they wanted, they insisted; sometimes they got very emotional. The process of doing work in commercial art was machine-like, but the attitude had feeling to it.

Why did you start painting soup cans?

Because I used to drink it. I used to have the same lunch every day, for twenty years, I guess, the same thing over and over again. Someone said my life has dominated me; I liked that idea. I used to want to live at the Waldorf Towers and have soup and a sandwich, like that scene in the restaurant in *Naked Lunch* . . .

We went to see *Dr. No* at Forty-second Street. It's a fantastic movie, so cool. We walked outside and somebody threw a cherry bomb right in front of us, in this big crowd. And there was blood. I saw blood on people and all over. I felt like I was bleeding all over. I saw [Continued on page 60]

Figure 5. Page 26 of G. R. Swenson. "What Is Pop Art? Part I." *Art News* 62, no. 70 (November 1963), featuring Andy Warhol's painting *Black and White Disaster, 4*, 1963.



Figure 6. Paul Thek. *Meat Piece with Warhol Brillo Box*, 1965. Beeswax, painted wood and plexiglas, 14 x 17 x 17 inches. Philadelphia Museum of Art.
<<http://www.philamuseum.org>>



Figure 7. Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey filming Viva and Taylor Mead in front of Cactus Creations, Old Tucson, Arizona, 1968. Photograph by Bob Broder.



Figure 8. Andy Warhol filming *Lonesome Cowboys* before tourists at Old Tucson, 1968.
Photograph by Bob Broder.



Figure 9. Paul Morrissey with cowboys and Viva. Still captured from Charles Littler, Warren Anderson, Shirley Pasternack and students of art at the University of Arizona, *Warhol Out West*, 1968. DVD transfer of 8mm film.



Figure 10. Viva eating yogurt with Taylor Mead at Rancho Linda Vista, Oracle, Arizona, 1968. Still captured from Charles Littler, Warren Anderson, Shirley Pasternack and students of art at the University of Arizona, *Warhol Out West*, 1968. DVD transfer of 8mm film.

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